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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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## 'Best washes' from Sotto to sweating lawmaker

By Carlito Pablo

"WHEN THE canvass is over, I will have this framed."

That's administration Rep. Manuel "Way Kuno" Jiamzon (Camarines Sur) waxing sentimental over a towel that looks ordinary, except for the playful words "Best worker."

## Dy says he fears for his life as Padaca backed by Reds

By Michael Lim Ubac

DATAGONG Isabela Gov. Faustino Dy Jr., scion of the political dynasty that ruled the province for more than three decades, says he fears for his life.

Dy, who led the gubernatorial election to unseat Gov. Grace Padaca, won a recount

# Big oil price hikes loom

## Pimentel shows link of Namfrel to GMA

By Christine O. Avendaño

AMIDST TEST the test up offside of the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) had shown they were clearly allied with President Macapagal-Arroyo, opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. the election watchdog to end its quick count of the May 10 presidential and vice presidential votes.

In a news conference in Congress, Pimentel said yesterday this was because the results of the quick count conducted by Namfrel under the leadership of its chair, Jose Concepcion, and secretary general, Guillermo Luz, "would not be a credible output at all."

Pimentel stood in on Concepcion, saying that the latter was ill and for Mr. Macapagal as shown by the fact that his vote was the manufacturer of ballot votes that had the President's name on it.

Pimentel brought along samples of the bottled water which bore the name of "GMA" and her 2007 win in it. There were also samples of an empty water bottle

QUENCHING to raise for evidence of Namfrel's partiality toward the incumbent, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. presents to the press on Thursday bottled mineral water bearing the face and initials of President Macapagal. The embattled senator made the point that the water was sold and distributed during the election campaign by FEM Corp. which is owned by the family of Namfrel chair Jose Concepcion

## P1.80/liter increase expected

By Abigail L. Ho
Business

IRRACE for a new round of hefty increases in fuel prices and the accompanying upward adjustments in the costs of basic goods and services.

Oil companies in the country are expected to raise the pump prices of gasoline by P1.25 to P1.80 per liter and of diesel by 60 centavos to 90 centavos per liter by the end of next week, a consumer watchdog said yesterday.

It will be the sixth increase for gasoline and the fifth for diesel since the start of the year.

Fuel prices are already at historic highs due to recent international oil prices.

Raul Concepcion, chair of Consumer and Oil Price Watch, said that oil refiners Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. would likely pull up gasoline prices by P1.25 and diesel prices by 65 centavos per liter.

Seaoil Philippines, on the other hand, can reportedly implement an increase of P1.80 per liter for gasoline and 60 centavos for diesel.

When reached by the business officials of Petron and Shell refused to comment.

Gasoline now costs P23.90 to P24.90 per liter, according to data from the Department of Energy. Diesel is retailed at between P18.40 and P19.35 per liter.

Gasoline prices have risen five times so far this year by a total of P5.20 per liter, while diesel prices have gone up four times by a total of P2.18.

The first increase took place on Jan. 3. The price of diesel went up by 20 centavos per liter. It was Next, gasoline prices rose by 80 centavos per liter and that

## Opposition to propose 25-member tabulation committee

By Cynthia D. Balana
and Christine O. Avendaño

WITH 14 certificates of canvass (CoCs) to go, Congress adjourned its joint session at 9:45 last night, making it likely that the canvass of votes won't begin until Monday.

But opposition lawmakers plan to present a proposal today on how Congress can canvass the votes without resorting to the 22-member joint committee, according to Sen. Edgardo Angara.

He said the opposition would propose that a 25-member tabulation committee perform the "ministerial" task of counting the votes while the whole Congress conducted the canvass.

"This is consistent with our view that the whole Congress must do the canvass, rather than a committee to Congress," he said.

Last night, Congress came close to completing the canvassing of the ballot boxes containing the remaining COCs but the session was suspended at 9:24 p.m., purportedly because of the lateness of the hour.

According to an account, the session was suspended because the lawmakers lacked a quorum.

The suspension of the session came only minutes after it was resumed at 9:15, allowing for the opening of the ballot box from Negros Occidental.

Presiding Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile suspended at 8:40 p.m. following a flare-up of tension on the floor that was started by an inquiry by opposition vice presidential candidate Sen. Loren Legarda.

At 8:30 p.m., Legarda rose to ask how presidential and vice presidential candidates could ask Congress to go beyond the CoCs

*Miriam tells Poe: Go away to find silver lining*

By Aruaine S. Reyes, Phil. C. Lopez Jr.
and Carlito Pablo

## Missing certificates blamed on Senate

By Maria P. Hutli, Christine O. Avendaño
and Fe Zamora

WHO DUNNIT? The Senate says it didn't do it. Neither the House of Representatives. Who is responsible?

But the certificate of canvass (COC) from Camarines Norte could have been lost in the Senate, an official of the Commission on Elections said yesterday.

"Baka may magnakaw doon [There may be a magician there]," Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano said.

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri personally had asked that the Camarines Norte CoC in the Senate on May 13. A letter made by the Senate confirmed that the CoC was delivered to the Senate for safekeeping.

"Since there was a receipt received by Attorney Casilla, it is logical to say it must have been lost in the Senate. There's no question about [it being lost] in transit because it was already received, delivered," Garcillano told reporters.

Confusion in the voting situation in provinces for Camarines Norte.

A controversy broke out Tuesday night during the joint session of Congress in the House of Rep-

## High court en banc hears stop-canvass case today

By Philip C. Tubeza
and Carlito Pablo

THE SUPREME Court has scheduled a special en banc session today to decide on the opposition's petition seeking to stop Congress from canvassing the votes for president and vice president.

"That's the agenda of the special session. [The justices] will deal with the canvassing problem," lawyer Ismael Khan, chief of the tribunal's Public Information Office, said yesterday.

Clerk of Court Lucenito N. Tapay said the session would start at 11 a.m. and might be over by 2 p.m. He said Chief Justice Reynato Puno Jr. and Senior Associate Justice Antonio Eduardo Nachura had returned from official leave and would take part in the deliberations.

Malacañang, through Presidential Spokesperson Cerge Remonde, expressed confidence that "the opposition will never get away with [its] plot to further derail the democratic process under the guise of raising constitutional issues before the high court."

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 2004

Second FRONTPAGE

**WEATHER FORECAST**

# Post-poll PNP revamp looms

By Christian V. Esguerra

NEW POLITICIANS, new police-men.

The Philippine National Police will undergo another major revamp beginning next week following the victory of new local government officials during the May 10 elections.

The revamp will allow newly-elected governors to choose their respective provincial directors, and mayors their own chiefs of police, according to Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, PNP spokesperson.

"Revamp it normal in any organization," he told reporters, dismissing suggestions of controversy marshmd on the reshuffle, the second one since December.

The reason Goltiao gave for the revamp highlighted the PNP's dependence on local governments officials in assigning men to towns, cities, provinces, and sometimes, even regions.

Before the PNP could effect the revamp, Goltiao said it would first submit to governors and mayors the names of five officials from an "eligibility list" approved by its Senior Officers Placement and Promotions Board.

From the list mayors and governors will choose chiefs of police and provincial directors, respectively.

Though the revamp, set to begin soon after the end of the election period on June 9, will affect mainly provincial and cities, Goltiao said new appointments would also be made in the national headquarters.

As many five top-level officials are scheduled to leave the service since they have reached the mandatory retirement age of 56.

They are PNP chief Deputy director Eliseo de, Deputy Director Elmo, Edgar Aglipay, the PNP's No. 2 man, and Directors Eunice Galang, Jose Lalican and Orlando Macellano.

# Al-Qaida man says he trained MILF bombers

By Alexis Pape

THE EGYPTIAN arrested for suspected al-Qaida links was one of several foreign militants who fought alongside Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels in defense of the MILF's Camp Abubakar stronghold in 2000, the military said yesterday.

Armed Forces Chief Gen. Narciso Abaya said Hassan al-Baker, who was arrested in Maguindanao on Wednesday on suspicion that he was providing funds to Muslim separatists, entered the country in 1999 together with six other foreigners. Abaya confirmed that Al-Baker was indeed Egyptian.

The Chabot came in from Malaysia, landed in Davao, was brought to Camp Abubakar and eventually to Camp Omar. During the 2000 all-out campaign against the MILF this fellow was supposed to have helped defend the Abubakar complex. There was also a report that he was part of those who defended the various camps overran by government forces in 2000," Abaya told reporters in Camp Aguinaldo yesterday.

Al-Baker had told interrogators after his arrest that he was a bomb instructor at the MILF's Camp Omar in Datu Piang, Maguindanao, and that he trained there with other Egyptians and Indonesians, a military official said on condition of anonymity.

Abaya said Al-Baker had trained members of the MILF as well as the Jemaah Islamiya, the Indonesia-based regional terror network with links to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida, in demolitions, explosives, the manufacturing of rockets-propelled grenades inside Camp Abubakar and other MILF camps.

He was also said to have instructed them in the rendezvous of the Koran, the Islamic holy book.

"You are aware of these foreign instructors that we have arrested double as presidents on the side. But they are mainly terrorist instructors," explained Abaya.

The military chief said authorities have intelligence information that the training of MILF fighters by foreigners has been going in various camps still controlled by the group in Central Mindanao.

The Abubakar and Omar camps were overrun by the military in 2000, but as part of continuing peace talks between the government and the Muslim rebels, a portion of Camp Omar was returned to the MILF as temporary quarters.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu yesterday denied that Al-Baker had links to the MILF and al-Qaida. He said the Egyptian was a "bonafide businessman" who was invited by a local religious leader in the 1990s to settle in Datu Piang where he married a Filipina with whom he has six or seven children.

Abaya said authorities have yet to determine if Al-Baker had intended to launch a series of bomb attacks in Mindanao and Metro Manila.

He said the authorities were still investigating the alleged links between the MILF and the al-Qaida, adding that the issue of the MILF's reported terrorist links would be brought to the attention of the government's committee on the cessation of hostilities in the peace negotiations.

The peace talks between the MILF and the government being held in Malaysia were deferred for after the elections and proclamation of the winners of the presidential race.

Meanwhile, the interrogation and debriefing of the captured suspect by the Antiterrorism Task Force under Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita is still going on.

"The standard debriefing is being done in a manner that ensures the suspect's rights," said a statement released by the defense department.

The ATF has asked the Bureau of Immigration for the records of Al-Baker to determine his alien status, the conditions of his stay and the history of his entry and re-entry into the country.

Abaya said Al-Baker had lawful dominicile. He refused to elaborate on possible charges against him, saying that would depend on the outcome of the investigation.

# DepEd on HS plan: Just doing our job

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

A DEPARTMENT of Education official said the department of education was only fulfilling its constitutional mandate when it decided to implement the "bridge program" in public high schools this June.

A teachers' party-list group has challenged the program's legality and asked the Court of Appeals to issue a temporary restraining order against its implementation.

DepEd Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Jose Luis Gascon said there was nothing unconstitutional about having freshmen undergo a pre-high school transition or bridge class.

"What does the Constitution mandate the department to do? It is to give quality education to our students. And we see the bridge program as doing exactly that," Gascon said yesterday.

The group, Advocates and Volunteers of Social Justice for School Students, had sought a TRO for what it called an "unconstitutional" program.

It said the extra year was an added burden to parents and students, and accused Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus of abuse of authority.

The CA has ordered the DepEd to reply to the TRO petition within 10 days.

The DepEd said 700,000 or half of the 1.4 million incoming freshmen would go through the one-year bridge class before entering the regular four-year high school.

Those are the students who had not mastered their elementary English, Math and Science subjects.

"This is a way to carry across our students who are not equipped with the learning competencies in high school," Gascon said.

Students in the bridge class would be taught two hours each on the three core subjects. Only when they pass could they go on to the four-year high school.

In Baguio City, Education Undersecretary Mike Luz on Wednesday defended the bridge program from the criticism that it would just be an added burden to both parents and the government.

He said the additional cost to parents would not come this year but in 2006 when those who had to take the remedial year reached their fifth year of high school.

With Carla P. Gomez, PDI Marjoni Barrido

# Usec defends agri funds release

By Christine Zaylican

AGRICULTURE undersecretary Joc E. Jocson Bolante yesterday defended the alleged agriculture funds diversion cases unearthed by losing presidential candidate Prush Chavez as "false, malicious and without basis."

In the first press briefing that he called since Chavez filed plunder charges against him, President Macapagal-Arroyo and other officials 10 days ago, Bolante said Chavez's accusations had "no concrete basis" and were public (sic) (sic).

"This attack has maligned the integrity of the Department of Agriculture. It has been a total by publicity and this has been unfair not only to the agency but also to my family," said Bolante who returned from a trip to Japan the other day and was reportedly scheduled to leave for the United States last night.

Bolante said he welcomed the investigation as "this is the opportunity to answer these false accusations."

Chavez alleged that funds from the agriculture department's P728 million Countering Misappropriation Act program were diverted to the President's election campaign.

He also alleged that friends at the DA of Fort Gonthamar Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo had pocketed as much as 30 percent of the DA funds that were released to congressional and local officials before the election campaign period began.

Arroyo former organizations joined the fray, alleging that they did not get anything from the program. A Palmerfish group alleged that another P395 million had been released for the program, bringing to P1 billion the amount of the funds that were allegedly misbandled.

Bolante said that had his accusers "exerted a little more effort" to reach him, they would have been enlightened about the GMA program which was meant to fund the purchase of agricultural inputs and fertilizer.

"I guarantee that this project and the transactions are all above board and the use of the P728 million, even peso of it will be accounted for," he said.

He explained that the release of the funds coincided with the election period because the procurement could not not just allow the palit to hamper projects for agriculture.

"Would you want the Department of Agriculture to stop (in operations) for awhile because of the national elections at the expense of our farmers?" he asked.

Bolante explained that he had nothing to do with the selection process for the project's recipients as the system was "demand-driven" and depended on an existing pipeline of project proposals from local government units.

"The DA's regional field units (RFUs) approve and evaluate the funding assistance of the LGUs. Upon approval, they are the ones who enter into a memorandum of agreement with the implementing LGU," he said.

**The RFUs would issue a partial release** of the allocated funds in favor of the LGUs once the MOA is approved, he said.

He said the government monitors the implementation of the project by watchdog which includes delivery receipts, lists of recipients and through actual field inspections.

He admitted having counter-signed the list of proponents for "authentication and to avoid any tampering or substitution" in the list filed.

Bolante clarified that Mike Arroyo was not his college classmate at the Ateneo de Manila University though he said Arroyo was "indeed a good friend and a good Samaritan."

"But he has nothing to do with these projects nor with its implementation," said Bolante.

# Tougher law vs gambling now in effect

By Nelson S. Flores

THE GOVERNMENT has put in place a tougher law to combat gambling, increasing prison term up to 20 years and fines as much as P1 million to those engaged in illegal numbers game.

The stiffer penalties are amendments to certain provisions of Presidential Decree 1602 designed to curb illegal gambling. The changes were recently approved by President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to Interior and Local Government Secretary Jose Lina.

Lina said the new law covers all forms of illegal gambling which uses numbers to conduct lotteries or bureau to giving jackpots, including illegal numbers games, masiao and last 2 cara.

Under the law, public officials and employees found acting as collector, agent, coordinator, controller, supervisor, operator or financier of any illegal numbers game shall face imprisonment of up to 20 years, a fine from P5 million to P6 million and permanent disqualification from holding public office.

Persons or guardians who involve minors, wards or disabled persons in illegal gambling activities shall be jailed up to one year and fined up to P400,000. Aside from penalties, the persons or guardians shall be deprived of anybody over their wards, the law says.

Republic Act 9287 also provides prison term of up to 90 days to bettors, while personnel and staff of illegal numbers game may be jailed from six years and one day to eight years. Collectors or agents face imprisonment of up to 10 years, and coordinators, controllers and supervisors may get a jail term of 10 years and one day to 12 years.

Financiers, managers and operators, meanwhile, face imprisonment of up to 14 years, financiers of up to 16 years, and protectors and enablers up to 20 years.

The new penalties are higher than those provided in PD 1602, which only imposed prison term of up to 12 years and fines of P400 to P6,000.

# Noli warms up

WHILE COMELEC remained locked in debate on the fate of the presidential and vice presidential candidacies, Sen. Noli de Castro yesterday warmed up for his next job by calling for the scrapping of the "dole-out" approach to poverty alleviation.

De Castro expressed his high regard for social workers during the 50th anniversary celebration of of the department of social welfare and development (DSWD).

"I only have profound admiration and high regard for the workers and employees of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)," said De Castro, who is leading the unofficial count in the vice presidential race.

"You are the first and last resort of the poor," De Castro told the DSWD employees in Filipino. "On you depends the hopes of millions of our countrymen."

De Castro, who ran with President Macapagal-Arroyo in the administration ticket, strongly urged a shift from the "dole-out and hand out" mentality to the enhancement of productivity and development in the approach to the poverty problem, saying it is about time that this be developed in people's minds for them to become self-sufficient.

## THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, June 4, 2004
9th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 2 Tim 3:10-17
Gospel: Mk 12:35-37

As Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he said, "The teachers of the Law say that the Messiah is the son of David. How can that be? For David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit declared: The Lord said to my Lord: sit at my right until I put your enemies under your feet. If David himself calls him Lord, in what way can he be his son?"

Many people came to Jesus and listened to him gladly.

Commentary

Today's passage praises the scribes greatly. It could bear several interpretations. The people who were listening to Jesus were close in their minds that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David—because of a text in their Scriptures, "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2S 7:13). They were clear. They knew the kind of Messiah they were to call. Whatever interpretation his saying is to have, it is obvious that he is opposing their clarity. He is rather saying that the Messiah will not be a descendant of David, or that he will be much more than a descendant of David.

There are people who insist on clarity above all else, thinking that clarity is a sign of truth. But there are many things that are clear and false. When we think we have understood something we say "I have it." We use the words "having," "grasping," "holding," and the like from the word "concept" (from Latin *capio*) means "to take". These words should make us aware, however, fundamentally it is not we who take the truth, it is the truth that should take us. As Dorothy Sayers put it, we are not here to get the idea into our heads, but to get our heads into the idea. To present false clarity is to be on the enemy of the truth.

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METRO
Editor Alexander B. Villamor

PUBLICIST'S MURDER

# Stolen cell phone led to arrest of killer

ALBA: He claimed self-defense in killing Fermanes.

By Lolita B. Salamero

HE LOVED not have "disappeared" without a trace.

A stolen cell phone tracked through the Global Positioning System (GPS) led to the arrest of the suspected killer of slain publicist Elsa "Ely" Fermanes, who was found stabbed to death in his Quezon City home on May 26.

### Self-defense

Tese BC Alba, 26, a waiter at the Hotel Benthamin, told reporters at a National Bureau of Investigation press conference yesterday that he had killed Fermanes in self-defense.

Alba claimed that Fermanes had attacked him with a knife after he refused to stop with the publicist and to take stolen cellfone to him.

Authorities found Alba through an Ericsson T610 cell phone he took from Fermanes on the night of the murder which he later gave to his girlfriend, Iheryl Ray Nieves.

Alba also took, and later sold, Fermanes's Nokia 3220 cell phone, and NBI intercepted executive officer Clave de Castro.

### No escape

National Bureau of Investigation agent James Tesoro said that the NBI and the Central Police District tracked the Ericsson cell phone through the GPS or location of Fermanes's cell phone service provider. Fermanes's cell phone was post paid.

Even if Nieves had replaced Fermanes's old SIM card with her own, the cell phone service provider was still able to trace its location through the GPS, Tesoro said.

NBI agents then proceeded to Nieves's house at the corner of Maria Clara and Galicia Streets in Sampaloc, Manila, where she was supposed to meet Alba.

Alba had been in the custody of the NBI's Intrepid Division since Wednesday, but was presented to the media yesterday by NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco only after Reynaldo Santiago, a caretaker at Fermanes's house, singled him out as the last person seen with the victim a day before he was found dead with 14 stab wounds. His room had also been set on fire.

Santiago said he had served dinner to Alba and the victim and had also opened the gate for the suspect when he left the next day.

### Requests turned down

In the presence of his parents and lawyer Allan Jimenez, Alba confessed to the killing, and showed reporters a scar on his right palm to prove that the victim had attacked him with a kitchen knife when he refused to comply with his requests.

The suspect also admitted that Fermanes had invited him in his house, where they had dinner and later watched pornographic videos before the stabbing took place.

Alba said he met the publicist at the Hotel Benthamin in April, but claimed that he had only gone out once with Fermanes.

However, Fermanes's friend, Brad Oscal, said he does not believe that Fermanes had attacked Alba, adding that it was not like his friend to do anything so vicious against another person.

# Probers told: Act fast on Castro case

By Lolita B. Salamero, Philip C. Tubeza, and Tarra V. Quismundo

ON THE theory that two heads would probably be better than one, the National Bureau of Investigation and yesterday that it would ask the Philippine Public Datel for joint forces to prosecute "a stronger case" in court regarding the investigation of the rape and murder of bank teller Caroline Castro.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said yesterday that he would invite NPD officials to a case conference to discuss the evidence gathered so far and to assess other data needed for a speedy solution of the case.

### Prosecution

Acting Justice Secretary Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez yesterday also ordered Manila City Prosecutor Ramon Garcia to expedite the preliminary investigation of suspects Philippe Manotlo and Brito Reyes for their alleged roles in the gruesome incident.

Gutierrez said she had ordered Manila City Prosecutor Ramon Garcia to hasten the investigation, "and, if the evidence warrants, file the case in court."

Castro, 23, was found dead inside her unit at the Wellagio Towers on May 12, 16th naked body bore 23 stab wounds.

### Police access

The police who has jurisdiction over the case, already has in its possession evidence in the rape-slay case, but the NBI stepped into the investigation upon the request of Castro's mother, Grace, Wycoco said.

The NBI now has Reyes, naval immigration official Bienvenido Reyes, but a suspect of it, but has yet to be served to him.

The other suspect, Philippe Manotlo, was earlier ordered arrested by the Manila prosecutor and is now detained at the NPD.

Castro's mother, Grace, said in a television interview that with Reyes now out of hiding, it would mean that the case filed in court could proceed.

NPD Director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong also ordered Reyes' coming out, saying he would wait for the NBI signal to give the police access to Reyes. Wycoco said yesterday that Reyes would be made available to the police for investigation, provided that it would be done in the presence of Reyes' lawyers.

SAFE BUT UNSAFE
Evacuees riding their tricycles with roving GMA7 teams as arm's length away as Sen. Ortigas Avenue during rush hour Thursday. But the little boy should wear a helmet for safety reasons.

# Poll loser shows folk, foes how to take defeat in style

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FROM afar, a pastor expressing gratitude from a candidate who lost in the election looks funny.

But upon a closer look, the pastor is a source of relief. Unlike other candidates, Caloocan City councilor Dick Gonzales still managed to thank those who supported him amid the pain of losing the congressional race in the second district.

The 49-minute text "Bagamat hindi ako nanalo sa halalan ang sabihan ng mga kaibigan ko ay isang malaking panalo para sa akin" (Although I did not win in the election, my friends say that I am a big winner) was sent to 1,000 people.

Gonzales had invited these texts as soon as the election results started coming in.

"This is my contribution to the healing process. My supporters are already disappointed and as their leader, I should set the example on how to accept defeat gracefully," Gonzales said yesterday.

Though the election is over, Gonzales is still rife in text-ing. Most of the texts he sent were sent to his friends in the media.

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Though the election is over, Gonzales is still rife in text-ing. Most of the texts he sent were sent to his friends in the media. Many losing candidates claim they were cheated and had filed election protests.

"Let us respect the decision of the people. Maybe they are not ready for the platform of governance I presented," he said. The bullets he distributed during his campaign carried a detailed list of projects he had planned to implement.

In the meantime, he would execute his private life as a citizen. He said he would continue his free legal assistance project for the poor city residents.

"Even though I lost, there were still a lot of people who voted for me and worked hard during my campaign, and I have to thank them," he added.

# 7 passengers hurt in Edsa smashup

By Tina Santos

SEVEN persons were injured in a three-vehicle smashup on Wednesday morning in front of the Cloverleaf Market in Balintawak, Quezon City.

Investigators said the Isuzu Elf truck was driven by Lorren Allies Jr., 27, and the jeepney driven by Randy Rimas Jr., 31, were pulling over on Edsa when another bus, Fire 1 Transit, rammed into the jeepney, which then hit Rival Transit.

Allies and Rimas surrendered to the police, while the driver of Fire 1 Transit fled from the scene.

Injured were jeepney passengers Rosalie Lozares Ordoñez, 39; Rhea Lumaad, 22; Barbara Arnaga, 14, and Jean Lumbangan, 34. Bus passengers Ms. Lieth, 47, Carmen Cervona, 37, and Apple Grace Bela Cruz, 15, were also hurt in the accident.

Police said the victims suffered minor bruises and contusions.

# Binondo man says he owns seized python

By TJ Burgonio

Cebú a python found across the concrete jungle, say from Manila to Quezon City, without proving stranded, dies as, or was over along the way?

Nonlife, if you ask its alleged owner.

A Binondo resident yesterday called the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB) to say that he owned the 12-foot python snapped in San Francisco del Monte, Quezon City last Tuesday.

The 10-kg python was seen coiled around a towering mango tree inside a compound in Barangay San Antonio, prompting frightened residents to call in a snake handler to subdue it. It was later brought to the DENR Reserve Center in Diliman Avenue for safekeeping.

Alfonso Tan claimed that the 10-kg snake was his long lost python, according to veterinarian Antonio Toledo, head of the PAWB's wildlife rescue center who said the Filipino-Chinese had told him that he had been looking for his pet for a long time now.

### No proof

Toledo, however, doubted Tan's claim. "How would it have traveled from Manila to Quezon City?" It seems unbelievable," Toledo added. Tan could not remember any distinct characteristic of his pet and proof of ownership.

Barangay officials believe the python had lived by the creek at the river that runs through the village before it had invaded one of its lot at the onset of the rainy season.

First on, Toledo advised the claimant to survive a formal letter to PAWB chief, Dr. Teresa Lim, stating his intention to recover the snake, and bring any proof of ownership.

### No assurance

"But there's no assurance that you would be able to recover it," he recalled as having told Tan, pointing to the lack of any proof. "If there's a legal document, there's no problem. You just have to show some proof."

At this point, the claimant withdrew, saying it was all right if he could not get his snake back as long as it is treated well at the rescue center.

The snake, now housed in a cage with two smaller pythons, is doing well, Toledo said.

# QC congressman-elect lashes back at rival

By Tina Santos

QUEZON City congressman-elect and lawyer Matias Defensor Jr. yesterday lashed back at his rating rival Mike Planas, saying the latter's allegations questioning his proclamation were baseless and "can only emanate from a disgruntled and sore loser."

In a letter sent to the Inquirer, lawyer Alfredo Villalosa, who wrote on behalf of Defensor, said they are now smelling over the filing of libel charges against Planas' wife, Patricia Dasa, for "issuing groundless and malicious statements against the Defensors."

"[We] hope that Planas will accept defeat gracefully and stop using his wife to perpetuate his dubious agenda of becoming a congressman by sheer technicality," Villanova said.

He said contrary to claims of Juan Planas, Defensor was winning over his rivals in all pre-election surveys, both official and otherwise.

"The survey only reflect the true will of the electorate, as definitely expressed in their ballots last election, where Atty. Defensor won by landslide. There was no uncertainty, he is the clear choice of the people," Villanova said.

On allegations that Defensor's son, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) chair Secretary Mike Defensor, was "overstepping the bounds of the public," when the latter campaigned for his father on national TV as early as May 12, Villanova said the young Defensor had been for doing so as he alleged that Juan Planas' statements were "malicious, if not libelous."

The members of Defensor had submitted all the certificates of votes from various precincts in the district right after the counting of votes on election day, thus, the result of the polls was already known by May 12, Villanova said.

Villanova also lamented that the young Defensor, who was also Pres-dent Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign spokesperson, was unnecessarily dragged into the supposed controversy.

## *3 FX rob suspects nabbed in Sta. Ana*

RESIDENTS of Sta. Ana, Manila, are now known a sigh of relief.

Police yesterday arrested three men suspected to be behind robberies inside PUJAs and jeepneys in the area.

Arrested were Jaime Arabejo, 37, his nephew Carmelo Ridaw, 21, and John Christ Cesard, 27.

Police said that with the arrest, there would be less robbers to worry about especially when chases begin next week.

Leila B. Salaverria

**ERRATUM**

SM Supermarket's ongoing Total Lowest Cost (TLC) promo from June 4 to 17, 2004 features the item 555 Tuna 155 g. at P10.25 which should be at TLC Sale Price of P14.50 and regular price of P14.75. Our apologies.

# Party-list solon hits Palace adviser

By Norman Bordadora

A BAITIST party-list group representative, who is rerunning in Congress, has accused National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzalez of continuing with his disqualification campaign against other political party-list groups, two of which were also succeeded in winning House seats.

Assalamin Bin. Cilquia Bellucan said he had received information from Commission on Elections sources that Gonzalez, through the Liberal Citizens Party (LCP), had filed a disqualification case against his and five allied party-list groups—Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Migrante, Anakpawis and Sanlakas—in Pangasinan.

Bellucan said the Gonzalez-backed LCP filed the case on the eve of the Comelec's proclamation of Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela as winners in the party-list group elections.

As in past elections, Bayan Muna was the top vote-getting party-list group, winning three seats for its nominees—incumbent Rep. Satur Ocampo, Joel Ubaldo and Teodoro Casiño.

Anakpawis won two seats for Rafman and peasant leader Rafael Mariano, while Gabriela claimed a seat for former Bayan Muna Rep. Liza Maza.

"To which we say, Gonzalez has made it no secret that he is out to get Anakpawis and its sister parties, and that he will not give up attacking us to the point of having us disqualified or even thrown out of Congress," Bellucan said.

He said Gonzalez was angered by an anti-communist article Bayan Muna had written ahead of what the progressive party-list groups would do in Congress.

"Gonzalez is afraid there will be representatives who will assiduously defend the interests of the working people, his is still set to become bolsters than are still neither bash down nor give an inch in defense of the poor," Bellucan said.

Casiño said the administration's vilification campaign proved successful in preventing three allied progressive party-list groups from winning seats in the House.

Casiño said the allied bloc of militant party-list groups expected to win eight to 12 seats in the House among the six groups.

The bloc managed to win just six representatives—three from Bayan Muna, two from Anakpawis and one from Gabriela.

"Based on the survey results before the elections, we were expecting to have at least 10 or 12 seats in Congress. If that happened, we could have formed a strong progressive bloc," Casiño said. "We could have come up with the swing votes."

Casiño said the limited mass base of Anakpawis, Bayan and Bayan Bangsamoro was diminished further by the administration's black propaganda which labelled the groups as fronts of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army.

As for Migrante, Casiño said the expected million-plus votes from overseas Filipino workers failed to materialize.

# Another group makes cut

By Martin Mell

A BAITIST party group made the requisite two percent cut for party-list groups in Congress yesterday and its representative is expected to join the ranks of the 22 newly elected party-list congressmen in the House of Representatives.

According to the last canvass report issued by the Commission on Elections, the group Ang Laban ng Indibidyong Pilipino or ALIP garnered 269,341 of the 13,243,979 votes cast to the party-list elections.

This was equivalent to 2.51 percent of the votes cast.

The canvass report represented 175 of the 176 certificates of canvass tabulated after the May 10 elections.

The only remaining CoC to be counted was the one from Basilan where there were more votes cast in the party-list elections than the total number of registered voters.

There were some 317,000 registered overseas Filipino but when the election results were being canvassed at the Philippine International Convention Center last month, it was discovered that more than 190,000 votes had been cast for only six of the 86 party-list groups.

This prompted representatives of the other groups to call for an investigation and the Comelec set aside the CoC.

In the Comelec's canvass report No. IV-A issued on May 31, ALIP was ranked 19th with 269,204 votes or 1.8 percent of the votes cast.

But with the addition of votes from Cotabato City and Lanao del Sur, ALIP surged ahead and overtook five groups—Kilusang Citizens Party Alliance for Kaunlaran and Democracy or Akad, ABA-MSD, Anak Mindanao or Amin and Ako Bisaya.

As Philex, however, was able to get 206,174 votes or 2.15 percent and its representative was one of those who were proclaimed the other day.

# Palace: No RP pullout from Iraq

MALACAÑANG said yesterday the Philippines is not considering pulling out its military and humanitarian contingent or evacuating civilian workers in Iraq but could redeploy the force to a safer area following an ambush that killed three Filipino workers were injured.

Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the Iraqi front handled by Ambassador Roy Cimatu was "constantly reassessing" the security situation in Iraq to ensure the safety of both the humanitarian mission and the civilian workers.

"So far we have not received any recommendation to pull out completely from the area and we will be making for more definite assessments from our people there," Bunye said at a press briefing.

"Our humanitarian contingent will say that their deployment options must be expanded to mean less prone to danger," Bunye said.

But any Filipino worker desiring to return home would be given full assistance by the government, Bunye said.

Three Filipino soldiers were wounded in an ambush by local militants on a military convoy in Baghdad's Iraq on Tuesday.

The Filipinos were traveling with United States forces in a non-combat convoy when they were attacked near the village of Taji, a field position south of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad.

The wounded soldiers, part of a 51-person humanitarian contingent of soldiers and policemen serving with US-led forces, were airlifted to a military hospital and were out of danger.

Apart from the Filipino soldiers there are more than 3,000 civilian Filipino workers in Iraq, mostly employed in US military installations.

The government stopped the deployment of civilian workers to Iraq after a Filipino truck driver was killed in a roadside bombing in April and another Filipino worker was killed in a mortar attack on a US military base in May.

Foreign Secretary Delia Albert said the ambush of the Filipino contingent was more in the nature of harassment rather than a direct threat.

"Our contingent is safe. There is no indication that the Filipinos in the convoy were the targets of the shooting. From all indications, as far as the militants were concerned, they were shooting at a convoy without necessarily having any knowledge that there were Filipinos on the convoy," Albert said in a statement from Manila where she is on an official trip.

Bunye said the Philippines remained committed to helping rebuild and restore democracy in Iraq.

He said that government "will not be put off in the midst of these security problems but we assure the public that the safety of our nationals is of paramount and utmost concern."

"We will be vigilant and we will try to reduce the risk. We will continue to cooperate with our neighbors especially those with whom we have more alliances in combating this threat," he said. Aside Labog-Javellana and Jerome Aning

# The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gozo

# US base in Iraq attacked

## *New government says security No. 1 priority*

**BAGHDAD**—A guerrilla attack on a major US military base in Iraq on Wednesday triggered a huge chain of explosions in an arms dump that left much of the area ablaze and shrouded in smoke, but no casualties were reported.

Iraq's new interim government devoted much of its first Cabinet meeting to thrashing out how to deal with guerrilla violence...the biggest threat to plans for elections in the new year and to its ministers' very survival.

Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, a combative former adversary of Saddam Hussein who worked with the CIA to help topple him, told his US-approved team of mostly-untried ministers in televised comments that security was the "No. 1 priority."

Underlining the problems, a new car bomb attack in Baghdad killed five people and wounded more than 35 on a busy street and an Arabic television station aired a tape of three Italian hostages held in Iraq dated May 31.

"We have been treated in an excellent manner up to now," al Jazeera quoted one of the Italians as saying as they sat at a table. A hostage-colleague of the trio was shot dead in April when Italy rejected demands to withdraw its troops from Iraq.

In another hostage case, an armed group released a video threatening to kill an Egyptian and a Turk if their governments did not condemn the US-led occupation of Iraq.

Shells and rockets screamed into the night sky after the attack on the US base in an airport on the edge of the southern oil hub city of Kirkuk.

"We can see rockets flying and landing all over the base," a Reuters correspondent said from a vantage point some 300 meters from the base's perimeter, as thick black smoke poured over the city some 220 km north of Baghdad.

Loudspeaker announcements could be heard on the base warning troops to stay under cover but there was no sign of ambulances or firefighting vehicles in the city of 700,000, which was under curfew after dark because of regular guerrilla violence.

Mortar and rocket attacks on US bases are almost daily occurrences across Iraq.

Sharing in the heavily-guarded Green Zone compound of the US-led occupation administration, Allawi said the interim government was effective only in charge as of now—although Washington is only due to formally hand over on June 30.

Allawi said the government would work closely with US-led forces after June 30 but was pressing its case at the United Nations on a resolution that will set the present Iraq ban over foreign troops on its soil.

"Yesterday and today, there have been terrorist attacks. As Iraqis we want to work with the multinational force and with friends and our brothers in the region to defeat these condemned threats to Iraq and the Iraqi people," Allawi said.

Reuters

## US to probe whether Chalabi leaked secrets

**WASHINGTON**—The Bush administration told Congress on Wednesday it will probe whether one-time ally Ahmad Chalabi undermined US security and officials said the FBI was investigating who leaked top secret information to the former Iraqi exile that allegedly was given to Iran.

CHALABI

Government officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Chalabi was alleged to have told Iran that the United States had broken secret communication codes used by Tehran's spy service.

The FBI is conducting an intelligence investigation to determine who in the US government provided classified information to Chalabi, sources familiar with the investigation said.

The FBI has begun administering polygraph examinations on a small number of Pentagon employees who had access to the information that was compromised, The New York Times reported on Thursday.

Chalabi has denied that he turned over US secrets to Iran. On Wednesday, his lawyers released a letter they said had been sent to Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller requesting Chalabi's denials, the Times reported.

The Times article quoted lawyers John Maxtham and Collette Goodman as saying in the letter: "The charges made against Mr. Chalabi—both the general and the specific ones are false."

Chalabi's lawyers also demanded an investigation to find those responsible for what they said were "false leaks," the Times said.

On Capitol Hill, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said US Director George Tenet also would be conducting an inquiry, lawmakers said after a closed-door briefing.

"It is my understanding they're looking into every aspect of how it occurred, who is responsible and what the implications are," said Sen. Mark Dayton, a Minnesota Democrat. "If it's true, it's a major, major, very major breach of security."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, a California Democrat, characterized it as not clear if all investigators, saying the CIA was "pulling it (information) all together."

The allegation was that Chalabi told the Baghdad station chief of Iran's ministry of intelligence and security that the United States was reading the communications traffic of the Iranian spy service.

The New York Times reported the specifics about the accusation on Wednesday, having earlier withheld details at the request of the government.

Reuters

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PTAA

# Saudi cracks down on funding of terror groups

WASHINGTON—Saudi Arabia said Wednesday it was dissolving an Islamic charity and creating a commission to manage private charitable work abroad, in a bid to crack down on financing of terrorist groups.

Adel al-Jubeir, foreign affairs adviser to Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, said the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation and other private groups would be dissolved or have their international operations sent under tighter rein by the new Saudi National Commission for Charitable Work abroad.

According to the Saudis, Al-Haramain received between $40 and $50 million each year in donations.

US politicians and the US news media have often questioned the Saudi government's determination to fight terrorism since the Sept. 11 attacks, when it became clear that 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi nationals.

The issue is often raised by Bush's challenger in the Nov. 2 election, Sen. John Kerry.

In January, the United States and Saudi Arabia announced they had taken action against the charity's branches in Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan and Tanzania.

The Saudi government ordered Al-Haramain to close all of its overseas branches in 2003 but subsequent monitoring has shown several are still in operation.

"We are working to identify and shut down the financial sources that support terrorism," al-Jubeir told a press conference at the Saudi Embassy here.

"We have audited our charities and reorganized charitable work abroad to ensure that funds reach their intended recipients," he said.

Al-Jubeir said the new commission "will be subject to strict financial legal oversight, and will operate according to clear procedures to ensure that charitable funds intended to help the needy are not misused."

Wednesday's announcements follow a deadly weekend attack attributed to al-Qaida militants in which 20 people were killed in the city of Al-Khobar, in the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province.

The White House praised the "strong" Saudi action in both crackdown on the terrorist finance network and hard drives inspects in the weekend cleaning campaign.

"You've seen strong steps taken by the Saudi Arabian government to crack down on terrorists. They took strong action to address the situation over the weekend and they are executing," spokesperson Scott McClellan told reporters.

Commenting on Al-Jubeir's statement, McClellan said: "We welcome those steps."

Saudi works "to someone we're working very closely with in the global war on terrorism," he added.

"We welcome the government of Saudi Arabia's actions today to disrupt the Al Haramain Foundation as a positive step in the global effort to stem the flow of money that finances terrorist organizations," Treasury General John Ashcroft said in a statement.

The US Treasury Department announced simultaneously that five additional branches of Al Haramain, which has been the target of sanctions in the past, would be placed on a terrorism blacklist because of "financial, material and logistical support they provided to the al-Qaida network and other terrorist organizations."

AFP

STUCK ON ICE

Photograph shows explorer Ernest Shackleton's ship, the Endurance, stuck on ice during his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914-16. One successful item from Britain's "golden age" of exploration, including Charles Darwin's notebook, David Livingstone's hat and more than half a million photographs, will be opened to the public next week, the Royal Geographical Society said June 2.

# 5 foreign, local humanitarian workers shot dead in Afghanistan

KABUL—Five humanitarian workers including three foreigners were shot dead Wednesday when their vehicle was ambushed in northern Afghanistan, officials said.

"A relative belonging to a non-governmental organization has been murdered by unknown armed people," Baghlan provincial police chief Amir Shah Sadozada told AFP.

"In an attack on a Medecins Sans Frontieres vehicle, two Afghans and three foreigners have died. It is too early to say who is responsible for this attack," he added.

Sadozada said the aid workers were killed by two men, one armed with a Kalashnikov and the other with a pistol.

"Three foreigners...one woman and two men—have died. Two Afghans, one a translator and the second a driver also died," he added.

Sadozada said he was on his way to the site in the Khast Hazar area of Qadre district of Baghlan some 100 km west of Kabul.

The incident was confirmed by several Western humanitarian sources who said the non-governmental agency concerned was Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), or "Doctors Without Borders," in Kabul refused to comment on the incident.

Provincial governor Asmullah Rashidi confirmed the incident which occurred at 4 p.m. (1130 GMT) and said the aid workers were from Medecins Sans Frontieres, an aid agency which exists to bring medical assistance to war zones and impoverished nations.

"Five people, three expatriates and two Afghans were killed by unidentified people," he said.

An Afghan security source speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP that among the dead are two Afghans, a Belgian woman, a Dutchman and a Norwegian man.

AFP

THE UNIVERSE IS HER BED

Newly crowned Miss Universe 2004, 20-year-old Jennifer Hawkins from Sydney, Australia, poses in Quito, Ecuador, June 2. Hawkins is on the first day of her yearlong reign making appearances on behalf of the Miss Universe Organization, its sponsors and her official cause of HIV/AIDS awareness and education.

# World's first private spaceship sets launch

SEATTLE—The world's first privately funded rocket plane plans to shoot beyond the uppermost layers of Earth's atmosphere later this month in a bid to demonstrate the viability of commercial space flight, organizers of the project said on Wednesday.

The SpaceShipOne project, backed by Paul Allen, the billionaire co-founder of Microsoft Corp., and led by aviation expert Burt Rutan, plans to send a rocket plane 100 km, or 62 miles, into the air and back down again in California's Mojave Desert.

"Every time SpaceShipOne flies an demonstrator that reliably modest amounts of private funding can signify vastly increased the boundaries of commercial space technology," Allen, a well-known technology and science buff, said in a statement.

The rocket plane, which will be carried in an altitude of 50,000 feet by a larger carrier aircraft called the White Knight, will spend about three and a half minutes at its peak altitude, during which the test pilot will report zero weightlessness.

During the latest test flight in May, test pilot Mike Melvill reached an altitude of about 90 miles, about two-thirds of the goal for the new flight, scheduled for June 21.

That was already the highest altitude ever achieved by a non-government aerospace program, and SpaceShipOne's organizers are calling the upcoming flight the first major step toward space flight for civilians.

To promote private space flight, the X Prize Foundation is offering $10 million to the first team that launches a private, privately funded spaceship with three people on board to 100 kilometers, brings it back to earth, and repeats the flight again within the three weeks.

Although SpaceShipOne's inaugural test flight this month will cost quickly for that prize, it is equipped with three seats and will later compete for the prize, organizers said.

At least 26 other teams are also competing for the prize, reported by investing backers such as Amazon.com Inc. founder Jeff Bezos as well as Google Inc. founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin.

SpaceShipOne doesn't look like a typical rocket, except for its bullet-shaped fuselage. Reuters

# Owls to fight field rats

JAKARTA, Indonesia—Farmers fighting rice-eating rats on Indonesia's Sumatra island have a new weapon in their arsenal—a flock of owls.

Local officials released 30 of the birds of prey in villages last week. They have since killed around 150 rats each night, said agricultural department head Sumiyati Hadi.

"The farmers here are very happy with the results so far," he said Monday from Sumatra's Bengkulu town, 900 kilometers northwest of Jakarta.

Hadi said farmers were still using rat poison alongside the owls.

Elsewhere in Indonesia, authorities have released snakes to combat rats that attack crops of rice, the staple food for the country's 210 million people.

AP

# Archbishop says Charles can marry divorcee Camilla

LONDON—British church leaders have cleared the way for the heir to the country's throne, Prince Charles, to wed a divorcee following years of debate about the constitutional implications, a report said last Wednesday.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, the worldwide leader of the Anglican church, has given his personal blessing for the prince to marry Camilla Parker-Bowles, the Times said on the front page of its Thursday edition.

Charles was previously married to, and divorced from, Princess Diana, who died in a car accident in Paris in August 1997, while Parker-Bowles divorced her husband two years before that.

The issue of whether the royal heir can marry a divorcee has raised constitutional experts for years, since the British monarch is the titular head of the Anglican church and thus officially expected to be beyond moral reproach.

Conservative Anglicans have long expressed opposition to Charles and Parker-Bowles marrying in a church given their unfaithful circumstances, with each other before the breakdown of their respective marriages.

However, the couple were now "actively considering wedding plans" after Williams dropped his objections to the union following several talks with the prince, the Times said, citing an unnamed friend of the heir.

Marriage in name a definite possibility, the friend—who is "authorized" to speak on Charles' behalf, according to the Times—was quoted as saying.

"It would be wrong to give the impression that they have not talked about it. That would not be right.

"But no one will rush into it or bounce them into it. It's a personal decision." However, any announcement would be impossible before the conclusion of a formal British police inquiry into the death of Princess Diana, which is still underway, meaning nothing would happen until "next year at the earliest," the friend said.

Clarke's office has said repeatedly that he has no plans to marry but he and Parker-Bowles have increasingly conducted their relationship in the open. She has met Queen Elizabeth II, attended the funeral of the Queen Mother Elizabeth in 2002 and has been photographed in public with the prince.

Public opinion is divided, with about half of Britons believing the pair could continue their relationship when Charles is king, but slightly fewer supporting the idea of their marriage.

In a 1998 poll, 38 percent of respondents said they believed the two should marry and 29 percent were opposed. In a similar poll last year, 42 percent thought the pair should marry while 36 percent were opposed.

However, 37 percent of respondents said they would find it acceptable for Charles to live with Parker-Bowles, without marrying her, when he is king. Thirty-two percent said it would be unacceptable.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey and Methodist Christian Faith "is all about forgiveness. We all make mistakes." "Neither is part of the human condition and there is no doubt that there has been a strong loving relationship, probably since they were very young, that has endured over the years," he added. AFP

WHY THE NECK NOD? Britain's Prince Charles with Camilla Parker-Bowles at a garden party in Edinburgh, Scotland, June 1, 2006.

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bangoy

# 'Lumad' army frees abducted DENR man

BUTUAN CITY—A lumad army freed yesterday morning a ranking environment official it held captive at a mountainous village in Nasipit, Agusan del Norte following days of intense negotiations.

Police and military authorities clarified that no ransom money changed hands for the freedom of Gringoher Nalzaro, regional environment technical director for operations of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) officials that their demand for livelihood and welfare programs such as forest and timber stewardship agreements be granted.

"We are amazed at some of our demands, and we're confident we can [do] their assessment," he said.

Kalinog added that their decision was also based on humanitarian considerations after the lumad found Nalzaro to be suffering from a lingering diabetes.

The release also came after National Democratic Front spokesperson in Mindanao Jorge Madlos ordered the communist-led New People's Army to conduct mass operations for the environment official.

Madlos claimed that Bill was backed by military officials who were engaged in illegal logging operations. The military denied the allegation.

Accusing the officials of "protecting" and "oppressing" their vested interests lands through massive illegal logging and tree plantations and mining, Bill Bigkas also called former from a beach resort in Buenavista, Agusan del Norte last Sunday.

The group alleged that Nalzaro and some 12 DENR men were corrupt and were found guilty of crimes against the indigenous people.

Bill is claiming to be fighting for greater autonomy for lumad-controlled areas in the region and is composed mostly of Manobos, Higaonon tribesmen based in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur.

Looking pale, Nalzaro, described his four-day in captivity as an awakening ordeal.

"Indeed, these were hapon on our part. Their demands were not complex. I learned a lot about the lumad's customs and traditions," he said regretfully.

Lawyer Rogelio Bondal, regional environment technical director for land services, told the inquirer that the incident had awakened them "to strengthen" their support programs for indigenous people.

"There's really a need to strengthen our programs for the lumad," he said.

Senior Supt. Edgar Tawantawan, acting police director, said he was happy that the crisis ended in a peaceful way.

*Franchise Calleyaid, PDI Bilbo Roman Bureau*

# Troops accused of beating, Army denies raps

CALAMBA CITY—An alternative media group in Southern Tagalog denounced the military for detaining and beating one of its members, and seven other human rights workers, last May 31 in a military camp in Barangay Poting-Kabig, Nasugbu, Batangas.

In a press conference last Wednesday, Melvin Mamit, a correspondent of the Southern Tagalog Exposure (STEX), said he was invited by eight group Karapatan-Timog Katagalugan (KT) to join other fact-finding group, to document reports of human rights violations in Batangas.

Maj. Jose Reyes, spokesperson of the military's Southern Luzon Unified Command based in Camp Vicente Lim in Calamba, denied the alleged beatings committed by the 202nd Infantry Battalion. "That's not true. That's part of the leftist think propaganda against the military establishment," Reyes said.

Reyes also stressed that taking of photos and video around the encampments is strictly prohibited. "But those leftists just kept on shooting video footage and taking photos," he said.

STEX, which is involved in the production of video documentaries and a regional newspaper, was often, it claimed with the Secretariat and Exchange Commission.

Mamit said the team of eight volunteers were in Nasugbu to confirm the whereabouts of those captured suspected New People's Army members, whose families have sought the help of Karapatan-ST.

Mamit said they proceeded to the military camp in Poting Kabig, arriving there around 2:30 p.m. of May 31, but the soldiers initially denied custody of the abductees.

"I started documenting the negotiation between the team and the military when a soldier approached me and told me to stop shooting. A soldier wearing a brown T-shirt started taking pictures of the fact-finding team with an automatic camera."

Mamit said another soldier tried to grab his camera prompting the rest of the group to persuade him from the violence. He said that he was able to go outside a jeep to protect himself and the camera.

"Those other soldiers came to get my camera. They hit me with their rifles until a soldier entered the jeep and choked me until they got the camera," he narrated.

Members of the media group's delivery vans also beaten, Mamit said he himself was made to sit while a soldier hit his stomach.

A blank paper was then passed which they were forced to sign, after which the group was brought out on the mountain location where charges were filed against them.

Mamit said the group was released at 7 p.m., after an almost five-hour ordeal. Gleylar Gobing

*with reports from Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

TAKE HOME PAY
Fisherman in Puerto Princesa bring home their catch for the day—yellow-fin tuna caught in Palawan's seas.

## ROUNDUP

### Bet's ally gunned down

KABULIS, Mex—A leader of a barangay council candidate in La Paz, Mex area gunned down while partaking his election campaign last Saturday here on Wednesday. Police said Romulo Cabanes, 44, a leader of Lakas-Kampi candidate Florencia Bernas, was shot in his face in San Sebastian last at 11 a.m. Reports said the assailants waited for Cabanes and positioned themselves in a forested area in the village. Police recovered 26 bullet shells at 45 caliber and shotgun from the crime scene.

*Anita Kira Paradez, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

### Car thieves nabbed

CAMP GEN. M.D.M. SAMONTE, Bulacan—Police last week arrested two suspected members of a car theft syndicate operating in Central and Northern Luzon. Bulacan police director Supt. Victorino Ignacio Jr. said the suspects, Cris C. Ore, 28, a mechanic from Bataan, and Vicente Pagsalingan, 29, a welder from Calumpit, were aboard a stolen Mitsubishi Lancer car, when arrested along the Cagayan Valley Road in Bulacan on May 29. Police recovered a .45 cal. pistol and a .38 cal. revolver from the suspects.

*Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

### 3-month old eagle captured

BASILIO CITY—A one-year-old Philippine eagle (Pithecophaga jefferyi) in its range of weight, height and wingspan was found in a village in Mt. Province recently. The eagle, said to be only three months old, was found roaming over Barangay Lias in Bontoc, Mt. Province, reports from the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) in Cordillera said. The report said Lias Barangay village chief of Lias, on saying that he and his fellow villagers decided to capture the eagle before it could be shot and killed by local hunters. Carlos said the eagle was captured as it was perched on a branch near a tall banana. Cattle, reports said, kept the eagle in a cage in his house while he was waiting for government personnel to claim it.

*Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

### Driver shoots self

TAYABAS, Quezon—A driver was killed after he accidentally shot his head with his own gun in Sitio Kanda, Barangay Piña, this town on Saturday. Witnesses identify was Sergio Delarmente, 20, of Barangay Ibaan. Sitio town, after he pressed the trigger of his gun. He was rushed to the Quezon Provincial Hospital but was pronounced dead on arrival.

*Mel Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

### Body found

LIBIS, Bulacan—The corpse of a still unidentified man was found in a shallow grave by officers of Barangay Poting Kabog in this town on May 29. The corpse had a height of 5'5" to 5'7", of medium build, fair complexion and wearing a white t-shirt and blue jogs of the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio City. Hearing pants and Reebok safety shoes. Barangay officials led by chair Alberto Cuenca reported the finding to the police, who took the body to the municipal General Service, Willoughby town. Post mortem examination revealed the victim was more likely to be a foreign national. Said multiple stab wounds.

*Mel Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

### Alert vs rice vendors

BACOLOD CITY— Bearers of persons going around selling sacks of rice to dealers, drivers etc. half of these outside mill. The police reported this motion reported following the May 26 arrest of Jose Soriano and Richard Gonzaga of Sitio Rosario, Barangay Mandalagan, Silay. Reports of Soriano's possession of the two suspected confessed that the sack of rice sold to him for P825 contained salt. Antonio, a resident of Hugo City, and Gonzaga of Bacolod City, were detained at the Silay police station awaiting the filing of charges.

*Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayan Bureau*

### Fire razes Guisan

TACLOBAN CITY—A seven-year-old girl killed about P1 million worth of property went up in smoke early morning of May 31 when fire of still unknown origin fire consumed the house of Guisan Town, Eastern Samar. Bernardita Balcazar, 33, of Lapay District, suffered second-degree burns and was brought to the Southern Samar Provincial Hospital in Guisan. Senior Fire Officer 1 Ruperto Pedrosa of the Guisan Fire Station said the fire started in the second room of the house of Balcazar. Investigation conducted by Sr. Insp. Ken Rosas, husband of Guisan Mayor-elect Nenita Gonzalez-Rosas. He said fire have set to determine the cause of the fire that razed the two-story residence but thousand more worth of property, including appliances, furniture, kitchenwares and four houses, including the one owned by Balcazar.

*Jong Cadiente, PDI Visayan Bureau*

# 7 former NPAs hurt in training in mountain village in Negros

By Carla P. Gomez
*PDI Visayas Bureau*

BACOLOD CITY—Seven members of the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) were injured last Wednesday afternoon when a rifle grenade they were practicing exploded during the last day of their training in a mountain village of Cadiz City, Negros Occidental.

Supt. Antonio Bandiola, commander of the Negros Occidental Police Provincial Office, said the seven were undergoing a basic military training in a forested area in the remote Barangay Colonia Villarin in Cadiz, about 65 kilometers south of this city.

Bandiola said the seven were conducting a quarterly refresher course on military tactics in southern Negros, when some of the RPA-ABB rebels were bullied to be operating.

Barangay Colonia Villarin, about 20 km from the city proper, has been the site of several armed skirmishes between the RPA and its rival New People's Army last year.

As a result of the several encounters between the two rival rebel factions, RPA-ABB commander captured the NPA guerrillas and recovered four high-powered firearms last year.

The NPA rebels were then turned over to the police and were subsequently charged with illegal possession of firearms.

Bandiola said the seven were confined at the Jose Locsin Memorial Hospital in Silay City.

Bandiola declined to identify the six others for "security reasons."

He said the seven were among the 40 fighters who graduated from the three-week refresher course on basic military training in a forested area in the remote Barangay Colonia Villarin in Cadiz, about 65 kilometers south of this city.

Bandiola admitted that they were conducting a quarterly refresher course on military tactics in southern Negros, where some of the RPA-ABB rebels were believed to be operating.

Barangay Colonia Villarin, about 20 km from the city proper, has been the site of several armed skirmishes between the RPA and its rival New People's Army last year.

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The NPA rebels were then turned over to the police and were subsequently charged with illegal possession of firearms.

# *Muslims seek apology from demolition team*

RAJUGO CITY—The Office of Muslim Affairs here is asking for an apology from the city demolition team after a member of the wrecking crew stabbed a Muslim trader in the back during a mandate.

Abdullah Macarimpar, assistant regional director of OMA for Rooto, Cagayan Valley and Cordillera, identified the victim as Mother Hassan, a native of Lanao del Sur who had been a trader in Baguio for two years.

Hassan was stabbed by a member of the Baguio demolition team on May 27. His brother, Ali Hassan, was punched in the face by another demolition team member.

"We will see that the accused stabber charges because the victim's purpose is to maintain a peaceful co-existence with our non-Muslim brothers," said Macarimpar.

He, however, said the Muslim trader organization is negotiating with the city government regarding the removal of sidewalk stalls in the central business district.

Cliffs said the city government went on a relocation campaign in demolish and remove sidewalk stalls a week after the May 10 elections.

"They seemed to be targeting only the Muslims. They thought we did not vote for the administration," said Habib, a Muslim trader who campaigned for Bilgera-elect Bonifio Gutierrez. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

# Marines move to complex amid protests

JAMBANGA CITY—The Philippine Marines has occupied seven barracks of the 9A barracks Cabalantgan Complex in this city despite opposition from residents.

Maj. Gen. Emmanuel Salamat, Marine Corps commandant, said he got matching orders and approval from President Macapagal-Arroyo to transfer their headquarters here sometime in 2002.

"There is a long standing instruction from the President for the Philippine Marine Corps to relocate here," he said.

He said they failed to transfer in 2002 because the "Marines Corps had a lot of problem organizationally and administrative-ly."

Starting April this year, the Marines have started to occupy the place, putting up some fencing units.

"But property belongs to the national government, this place is owned by the Filipino people," Teodosio said.

The Cabalantgan Complex also houses the abandoned satellite building of the Sandiganbayan Regional Anti-Graft Division.

Teodosio calls the headquarters at the Cabalantgan Complex "camp Gregorio Lim," which he said would be home for Marines from Luzon and Visayas who will be deployed to Mindanao.

There are about 8,200 Marines nationwide, 83 percent of whom are assigned to Mindanao.

But Gene Jimenez, legal counsel of the 46 lot owners in the Cabalantgan Complex, said the Marines have occupied some portions owned by... Julio Alipala, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

**LONGING**
A child of one of several dozens of peasants who rallied in front of the Department of Agriculture office in Quezon City to demand land is photographed emoting an end to the rally.

# Lending program opened for small traders

MUNAYAO North Cotabato—The provincial government will open an interest-free money lending program for small entrepreneurs as realizes the efforts of all private borrowers on local prices of basic commodities.

"We are now into the stage of implementing a micro-economic development program for small businesses," North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Piñol told reporters Tuesday.

Piñol said the program will put up P1 million in revolving capital to be lent interest-free to market vendors here.

He said the lending program's credit window facility was included in the local government's agenda for the first 100 days of his fresh mandate as governor.

"With infrastructure projects completed and in place, and with a more stable peace and order situation that we look forward to, we are now shifting our focus to strengthening our people through enhanced entrepreneurship," Piñol said.

The reduced governor said small vendors were so dependent on moneylenders, making prices of basic commodities unstable in the wet market.

A month ruler of the governor's, peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Piñol said he saw now the peace effort is "doing very, very well," and that his rival and late administration was giving it a push "for the moment." *Shadi Bhadema, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

# Winning gov accused of poll dirty tricks

BAGUIO CITY—Mt. Province Governor-elect Victor Dominguez was accused on Wednesday of circulating forged Certificates of Ancestral Land Titles (CALTs) during the campaign to unseat his rival, a former official of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

Saint Dasan, former NCIP chair, referred to Dominguez, a former representative of the province and Sabin-CIDS official, as "the one who benefited" from the May 10 election when photocopies of CALTs were circulated in Bagnen City, Sesgapet and Mt. Province.

Dasan, in a press conference on Wednesday, said those photocopied CALTs were legitimate documents, but Dominguez's camp allegedly superimposed the names of claimants with the names of Dasan and his family members to make it appear that he acquired lands using his office in 2001.

The NCIP's Ancestral Domain Office (ADO) certified on May 21 that no window of Dasan has applied for ancestral land or ancestral domain titles.

Dominguez, who garnered 20,116 votes in the final Commission on Elections count, led Dasan by only 2,439 votes.

Dominguez denied fabricating the titles that suggested a Dasan land deal, saying the documents were leaked to him by former NCIP employees. The documents were distributed on May 8 during Dominguez's last political rally in Sagada town.

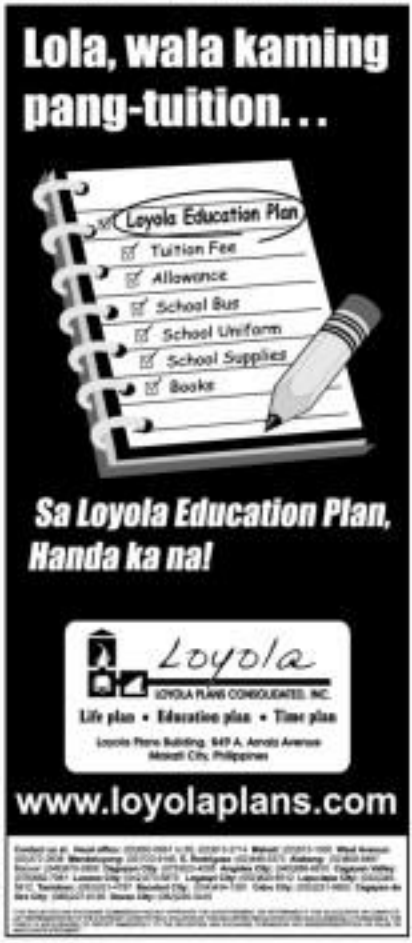
Dominguez said he asked the Office of the Ombudsman in February to investigate the "midnight titles," months before the final campaign period. He said the "fake titles" were used to sell supposed ancestral lands to unsuspecting buyers.

The Inquirer first ran a story in 2003 that took Dasan to task for signing 648 "midnight titles" for indigenous applicants all over the country on the days when former President Joseph Estrada was being ousted from office.

To date, the government has yet to issue a single CALT, despite race fronts of the Malacañan Palace promising a hundred such documents under the term of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ms Macapagal ordered an investigation of these titles in April.

But an NCIP report on the review of all 600 titles this year showed that 94 of these "midnight titles" have already been cleared for release by the NCIP. *Vincent Cabreza and Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

'BANKRUPT TRADER'

# MILF spokesman says cops got wrong terror suspect

By Edwin D. Fernandez
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—The Egyptian national arrested by agents of the National Anti-Terrorism Task Force and operatives of the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation in Dasmariñas, Cavite, is not Abdul Basit Abdurahman, a "bankrupt trader and not an international terrorist, a rebel spokesperson said.

About 15 heavily armed men backed by armored personnel carriers encircled dawn on the house of Hassan al-Bahry, 50, in Barangay Lumbayan, Buru, Pasig. He did not resist arrest when told that he was wanted for questioning by the immigration bureau.

Eid Kabalu, speaking for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), claimed that al-Bahry used to be a trader doing business in Taguig, Metro Manila until his partners duped him.

Sources from the Army's 6th Infantry Division claimed that he has links with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda international terror network and was responsible in training MILF fighters in making bombs and conducting urban terrorist operations.

He reportedly held training activities including abductions, MILF's former facilities in Maguindanao until it fell to government hands in 2000.

Quoting intelligence reports, an Army official said al-Bahry has been hiding in Dalo Pitong, a town in Maguindanao that falls under the coverage of Camp Omar, one of the MILF's satellite camps recognized by the Philippine government as rebel-identified areas.

Kabalu said the charges were his means to undermine the peace talks between the government and the rebel group.

SCENE of the illegally cut logs from Sierra Madre drifting toward the shore of Kilayaw village in Infanta, Quezon.

# ₱2M in hot logs seized

INFANTA, Quezon—At least ₱2 million worth of abandoned illegally-cut logs were recovered by the Philippine Navy and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources during a three-day operation as part of their intensified campaign against illegal logging in Sierra Madre.

Emrich Borja, provincial environment and natural resources officer in Quezon, disclosed that the recovered logs were found on May 29 along the coast of Barangay Alitaya, Infanta.

"It was first spotted in the area off San Marcelino Point between Infanta and General Nakar, but the next three days, it was a relentless search until we found them in Barangay Alitaya," he said.

Lt. Commodore Renato Rimuls led the team from the Philippine Navy.

He said it appeared that the illegal logs, most were still in the water, were being headed to an undisclosed destination.

"The people in the area suspected to illegally downstream others are unfamiliar, fearful that they would also be questioned," he said.

The seized illegal logs consist of 1,952 round logs of assorted dipterocarp species, measuring an estimated 356 cubic meters and worth at least ₱2 million in the commercial market.

Federico Olympio, DENR officer based in Real town, said the confiscation of the illegal logs serves as a strong warning to illegal loggers in the Sierra Madre.

"We expect more arrests and seizures of illegal logs in the next few days. Our hotlines are operations continue," he said. Jaclyn T. Abellar Jr., PDI Trend News Center Bureau

# Teachers unite amid fraud raps

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Thirty-five leaders of more than 1,000 public school teachers in this city stood shoulder to shoulder in a show of unity to show virtually silent homage and kneel to elect the areas for local leaders of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos in past elections, are gearing for another fight.

This time it is to counter protests claiming they aided in fraud during the May 10 elections.

Jose Guerra, president of the North San Fernando Teachers Association, said their meeting Tuesday was held as rumors and text messages continued to spread and malign those who served in the board of election inspectors (BEI).

"It was so painful to hear the accusations. The allegations have adverse effects on us, as our profession," said Guerra, a member of the city board of canvassers.

He said the May 10 national and local elections in the city were "very peaceful, orderly and honest."

On Tuesday, they have yet to receive copies of formal charges from losing candidates. They were nevertheless rapping the support of lawyers, according to Apollo Tamolo of the Pampanga Rightsbloc.

"Shall we wait for authorities to pick us up?" asked Rosario Bondoc, quoting the anxiety of one of her colleagues in the San Fernando West Teachers Association.

Former Immigration Commissioner Andrea Domingo confirmed she filed an election protest with the Commission on Elections on May 10. She said her son, former Rizalde Domingo, ran but lost in the mayoral and congressional races, respectively.

In a telephone interview, Domingo said she sought a recount of the votes, adding the losses she cited were the alleged distribution of election paraphernalia to the BEIs on May 9.

The Omnibus Election Code, she said, allows this only for justifiable reasons. Domingo said she was not convinced there were justified reasons to do that since the city is "very small."

"I have nothing personal against the teachers. I filed my protest to prove reports of election fraud, seek the prevention of these in the next elections. The fight is about me of principle. I'm not running for any public office again," she told the inquirer.

Guerra said teachers who served in the BEI took the paraphernalia home to "secure them."

"We only opened the ballot boxes and the envelopes before the full view and consent of the representatives of the political parties and watchers at least before the casting of votes," he said. Timothy Dugan, PDI Central Luzon Desk

TATA Pido walks with an aluminum walker after he survived a murder attempt on May 10.

# Party-list leader who survived murder try inspires colleagues

By Delfin Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—The injuries that Dedro "Tata" Pido Gonzales suffered in what could have been a fatal attack failed to stop him from seeking a position in the provincial board of Quezon.

In the early evening of May 11, Gonzales, chair of Abanganets in Quezon province, was ambushed by two unidentified suspects some 30 meters from the party-list group's headquarters in Gumaca town.

He suffered seven bullet wounds in different parts of the body but he miraculously survived.

The attack has left him limping and tied to wearing boxes in one eye.

But defiance continues to rage in him.

"They can't wipe out the whole Abanganets," Gonzales, commonly known as Tata Pido, 66, said before more than 100 activists during the party-list group's first post-election assembly on Tuesday.

Gonzales condemned what he called the harassment and intimidation against the progressive party-list group members. His audience gave him a standing ovation.

His fellow activists said they now see him as a "source of inspiration."

"He nurtures our lives and struggles. That seed of our individual resistance is fraught with danger; we have to move on and persevere in our struggle," said Fred Torres, a former leader from south Quezon.

During his appearance last week he is one of Abanganets' radical activities at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City, leftist activities also gave Gonzales a standing ovation.

The Left pointed to the military as the culprits. Officials of the military's Southern Luzon Unified Command, however, denied responsibility for the assassination attempt.

To his would-be killers, Gonzales gave this message: "You failed in your mission to silence me to erase the progressive ranks into submission. We will never win."

Gonzales, who first has led for a seat in the provincial board, said that aside from his breath with death, the last election has also left him with amusing memories and also dismay.

But these, he said, led to his firm resolve to carry on and help reinvate the masses.

"I really could not believe that for once, I also become a politician and joined the election. I will not forget this," he said, sounding amused at his experiences in the campaign.

Gonzales said he himself had experienced the ills that plague the campaign and the election process.

"Now I realized why every elected official must resort to graft and corruption if only to recover their huge election expenses," he said.

He wrote, especially those in office that have not been raised frequently by leftist groups, were asking for almost everything from the candidates, including liquor and cigarettes. They also expected to be dined and wined, said Gonzales.

But he said once he talked to the voters, "the perception about me and the progressive party list group really changed."

# Gunmen kill 2 ex-rebels

CEBAMO CITY—Unidentified gunmen shot dead a former Moro Islamic Liberation Front leader and his brother in Lamboang, Sultan Kudarat on Wednesday.

Police said the victims, Ismin Bulan, 67, and his brother Maguid, 56, both of Lamboang and former MILF guerrillas, were shot by two men in a motorcycle at about 8 a.m. Wednesday while the two were waiting for a ride back home. Police said the attackers could be their former comrades.

The Islamic secretariat in the government that years ago and have been living peacefully un-til the shooting, Ali-main Arvinsalic, PDI Mindanao Bureau

LEGISLATORS ASSAILED

# Cebuanos decry cheating raps

By Bernadette Pisca
and Cassie E. Fernandez
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—A civil society group has demanded that Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Magsaysaysan Rep. Didagen Dilangalen take back their statements that massive fraud was committed in Cebu in the last elections.

Paul Hubahib, a leader of the Cebuano group Bantay Pilipino, said Cebuanos resent Sen. Pimentel who they think are illegal rights' candidates.

He said the Cebu Citizens Involvement in Maintenance People's Empowerment and Liberation (C-Cimpel), an election watchdog, had judged that elections in Cebu to be "generally fair and relatively peaceful" despite the usual cheating and confusion on election procedures.

The C-Cimpel is the local counterpart of the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel).

"Sweeping and unfounded statements accusing Cebu voters of political atrocities are totally unacceptable," Hubahib said.

He asked the call of Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal to remain sober but vigilant in awaiting the official results of the elections.

"We pray that peace-order, reasonable voters would lead calm to our troubled land. We need to put on with the huge task of nation building as united and God-loving Filipino citizens," Hubahib said.

Last week, Dilangalen claimed that there was vote-shaving and padding in Cebu City.

He said the election returns from Precinct 1268-A in Barangay Lahug where President Macapagal-Arroyo received 111 votes and Fernando Poe Jr., 34.

But in the statement of votes of the same precinct, he said Ms Macapagal's votes went up to 146 and Poe's votes dropped to 12.

But Cebu City Rep. Raul del Mar contested him that Dilangalen was reading the votes in from Precinct 1268-A in Barangay Inayawan, not Lahug.

There are two 1268 precincts—one in Barangay Lahug in the city's north and in Barangay Inayawan in the south districts.

Pimentel also raised suspicion that cheating was committed in Cebu, mainly because Ms Macapagal got more votes than former Gov. Jose Osmeña while Osmeña ran for presidency 1998.

He said Ms Macapagal got 1,185,698 votes while Osmeña only got 965,352 votes here in Cebu during the 1998 elections.

Pimentel, however, said he had not done anything wrong because he did not say the Cebuanos were cheaters. He said the lawyers of the Southeast ng Nagkaisang Pilipino and some figures in the coalition of veterans in Cebu did not match the statement of votes by precincts or municipalities.

But he said he has not seen those documents, so he could not make any conclusion.

Mr Macapagal said the conduct of the elections on May 10 were generally peaceful and honest.

During an informal dinner on Monday night with business and political leaders, Ms Macapagal said she joined the Cebuanos and the rest of the Visayas "in enough and vehemently protesting allegations that we cheated in the elections."

"Deep in our hearts, we know that Cebuanos fight fair and square and that the votes in this region were cast and counted fairly, peacefully and honestly. This is the general trend throughout the country and nobody can deny it," she added. With a report from Jhaemore Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

# OPINION

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## The new Senate

NOW that the dust in the battle for the last Senate seat between the ex-Marine general, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, and the ex-police colonel, Sen. Robert Barbers, has cleared, it is time to take a good, long look at the new Senate.

The winners are a mix of the old, the new and the returned.

**EDITORIAL**

The mix of old money and new MTV-style politics was a potent cocktail, explosive enough to send Mar Roxas's Roxas and Jamby Madrigal to the Senate. Though the statistics on TV exposure are still being collated, it is certain that Roxas led all other candidates in number of commercials aired. Madrigal, who capitalized on the endorsement of the movie star Judy Ann Santos, cannot be far behind.

The old joke about the ABS-CBN network being the country's most powerful political party remained its bite. Six years after news anchor Loren Legarda topped the 1998 Senate race, and three years after program host Nikki de Castro topped it in 2001, the network once again played a key role in shaping the Senate election results. Roxas' well-publicized romance with news anchor Korina Sanchez helped him top the Senate race; the network's decision to air, the week before the election, a TV drama on the life of the late Sen. Renato Cayetano, another politician propelled to the upper chamber on the strength of his ABS-CBN show, helped his daughter Pia claim a seat in the Senate.

The old saw about the equity of the incumbent, however, just some of its teeth. Five senators ran for reelection, including a candidate with the most potent surname in Philippine politics, John Ormeña. Only two were the twin victims of dagdag-bawas in 1995, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Biazon, but none on opposite sides of the fickery political fence. Pimentel lost, partly because he had alienated the solid Cebuano bloc after Joseph Estrada won the presidency in 1998, partly because of his unquisitely jumping over the political fence. One of the 11 senators in the Estrada impeachment trial who voted to keep the accused Jose Velarde envelope unopened, Ormeña joined the People Power Coalition briefly in 2001, to retain his chairmanship of the finance committee, only to leave it a year later, precipitating the infamous rump sessions. But earlier this year, he jumped back, accepting a place on the administration ticket.

Barbers, the ex-police colonel who raised the Estrada impeachment because of a medical operation, and Sen. Robert Jaworski, the basketball legend who also voted to keep the Velarde envelope closed, also lost their reelection bids.

The election of Jinggoy Estrada, the deposed president's son by Sen. Loisa Ejercito Estrada, has proved yet again that the Estradas' voting bloc, nurtured on a diet of celebrity and populism, remains solid. It did not hurt that among the opposition candidates, the younger Estrada ran one of the best organized campaigns.)

And those years after stepping down in 2001, the candidate with the longest political resumé, Juan Ponce Enrile, was returned to the Senate, in part because the man who infamously "laid the predicate" to the Estrada impeachment was cited but not guilty of plunder, and in part because he allowed himself to be seen as a senior statesman: the leader courageous enough to rake in the unpopular purchased power adjustment (PPA) fee.

It is certain that the leadership of the opposition in the Senate will be shared by Sen. Edgardo Angara, Enrile and Pimentel (who is targeted for reversionism by the so-called Wednesday Group). They will be certain to count on the support of the two Estradas, but Senators Sergio Osmeña and Fred Lim are too independent-minded, and Sen. Panfilo Lacson is Angara's bitter foe.

Madrigal has declared herself to be mentally with the opposition, but whether she has the backbone for this remains to be seen.

All told, and assuming that Sen. Nell de Castro will hold on to his lead in the official quick count to win the vice-presidency, the administration can count on 14 senators, while the opposition can count on nine.

If President Macapagal-Arroyo is proclaimed the winner of the presidential race, she can then look forward to a comfortable majority in the Senate (and in the House too). There would be no excuse for legislative gridlock. If opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. is proclaimed instead, he will find both Houses of Congress less pliant and less easy to please than movie audiences.

## 'Agri lands,' 'forestlands' in Quezon City

AS I SEE IT

*Neal H. Cruz*

MEGHARAVE column: Almost 40 years ago, pending condemnation got an immediate assignment from my friend, Eli Cura, to prove subdivision owner Jose Ma. D. Melencio was guilty of violating subdivision regulations when he built Melencio's mansion there on a hill overlooking the entire subdivision and other neighborhoods.

The mansion, acquired only in June 2002, cost Melencio more than a million pesos. Its design and manufacture conform to all local municipal standards. The construction also contains a special insulating fluid, SCEmcp, which it is this material fluid duly approved by the Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) of the United States, even by indoor appliances in fact, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) USA has not had any report and laboratory data of fires caused by transformers filled with 9-Temp fluid.

"To prove its point, Melencio is willing to have the transformers in question examined by any qualified third party who has the competence on the matter. Melencio is confident in its finding that the damage to the transformer was due to a fire that started outside the transformer."

The joint inspection also revealed that there were several LPG tanks close to the transformer and the service wires. This gives rise to the possibility that a leak in the gas lines may have led to the fire," Eli continued.

"Besides, would also like the Subic claims from some individuals and accuses that the Bureau of Fire Protection (Manila Fire District) has pinpointed its misdeeds as the cause of the fire. In fact, the subject manufacturer, as earlier mentioned and upon the suggestion of the BFD itself, shall be the subject of an internal inspection by all the parties concerned before a competent and impartial third party to determine its condition."

So far, about numerous explosions where these persons were killed and several others suffered serious burns, Eli said Melencio paid for the funeral and hospitalization expenses of the victims.

* * *

Sen. closes agricultural farms in Quezon City so that millions of pesos from the Department of Agriculture intended for the purchase of fertilizer and other farm inputs were released [according to a list made by agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn Bolante] to QC Rep. Mitos Defensor and Novaliches Rep. Feliciano Sandoval? (Congresswoman Defensor was aware of presidential spokesman Miller Claudio's statement having received the P5-million supposedly released to her.)

Meanwhile it has a Farmers Market in Cubao, QC and Sources don't have any farms, but the fertilizer money could have been diverted somehow to the politicos.

Farmers Solicitor General Frank Chavez, who has filed plunder charges against President Macapagal-Arroyo and several other public officials, said P728 million in 124 funds meant for farm inputs were released in 139 congressmen, 23 governors and 23 mayors, or P3 million to P5 million each, for GMA's election campaign.

If you find spending public money for agricultural farms in Metro Manila unjustifiable, there's more: Is it true that funds for "farm-to-market" roads are also released to Metro Manila congressmen?

And do you know that the Bureau of Forestry still classifies large tracts of land in Metro Manila as "forestlands"? Although there is no forest left in it except perhaps the La Mesa watershed? Has 'one have the huge squatter colonies along Luzon Avenue and surrounding areas in QC started. The Bureau of Forestry declared subdivision lands there, which could and should be private property, as "forest land" to give its employees an excuse to accept them as forest homelots. The squatters are professional squatters/followers].

Now the rightful ex-owners can't recover their homelots within their area declared by the QC government as pay higher and higher rates.

## Bush vs Gore, Philippine version?

PASSION FOR REASON

*Raul C. Pangalangan*

HIS OPPOSITION congressmen has asked the Supreme Court to stop the joint congressional canvass from consuming the votes for president and vice president. He argues that under the Constitution all congressmen and senators are entitled to take part in the canvassing, and that this task cannot be delegated to a joint committee.

This reminds me of January 2001 when a president was sworn into office not in the strength of a Supreme Court decision. In Bush vs. Gore, the nine-man US Supreme Court, by a vote of 5-4, stopped the recount of votes by the state of Florida and paved the way for the presidency of George W. Bush over Al Gore. Look at the numbers: Bush 2,909,135 votes, Gore 2,907,351, or a slim margin of 1,784 votes. Since "the margin of error exceeds the margin of victory," under Florida law there was an automatic machine recount, which reduced Bush's lead to an even ominous 300 votes. Gore then got the Florida Supreme Court to order a manual recount in several counties, which would have made Gore the winner by 500 votes margin. Without the Florida vote, neither candidate secured enough votes to be declared winner. The US Supreme Court then stopped the manual recount, saying that with a fixed statutory deadline for counting votes, it was impossible to do a manual recount of the contested ballots safeguards, and allowed the questioned Florida returns to stand. The Court concluded: "Where contending parties invoke the processes of the courts...it becomes not unthought to suggest that the litigants, the electorate and indeed the whole nation will perceive the court as nothing more than a political body."

What does the Philippine Constitution say? It says that for the presidency and vice presidency, the election returns and the certificates of canvass shall be transmitted to Congress. The certificates of canvass, or basically, the summary of votes issued on the election returns from all precincts in a province or city, are opened by the Senate president "in the presence of the Senate and the House of Representatives in joint public session" and "...no vote nor the critical claims—the "Congress, upon determination of the authenticity and due execution thereof in the manner provided by law, [shall] canvass the votes." The implementing rules now contained before the Court, however, say that this function shall be performed by a joint committee created by the Senate President and the Speaker.

What is really at stake, however, is the capacity of the opposition to inquire into the viability of the certificates of canvass. They contend that the election returns do not tally with the results shown in the certificates of canvass, and indeed that there are missing COCs. I need to be clear the term "wholesale cheating" refers to the three areas of the Visayas, Maguindanao. However given the term a Gore show, that is, "wholesale" in contrast to "retail." Why bother having an opening only votes or precinct level, when it is easier to just devote the official summative transmittal to Congress?

Although in this stage we tend to be blind about changes and counter-charges of election cheating, what I saw on TV the other night showed me, Imee Bello Rodriguez, NPC lawyer, showed originals of the COCs official copy of the certificates of canvass showing six erasures between the number of votes written in words and the numerical figures. In the sample that he showed, the votes for GMA in words were "seven hundred seventy" but in figures appeared as 8,761, whereas FPJ's votes were, in words, "four thousand two hundred six" but in figures appeared as 1,221. (I am not sure if these figures are correct, but the principle is the same.) In other words, in this sample sheet, the candidate gained 8,000 votes by the simple stroke of turning the number "9" in front of 715, while another candidate lost 3,000 votes by the simple stroke of changing a "9" to a "2."

Administration congressmen assured that they can wave victory of fraud, though they did not present any evidence.

But what [probably] shielded the vote that administration lawyers relied solely on the legal argument that Congress must not inquire behind the certificates of canvass, and can operate only their "ministerial duty and that ends there." Does if that were correct—and that is a big question on which lawyers can differ—then were totally oblivious to the legitimacy of the election process. If we can imagine computer-based accounts, based with patently manufactured certificates of canvass and tamper-proof of tampering, will considerably rest on these figures of fact. Indeed, that was the issue that the Supreme Court had to resolve in 1986, when the Batasan Pambansa declared Ferdinand Marcos as the victor in the snap election. That is why that senate, when canvassing was a non-factual act, was replaced with the Commonwealth Commission solely given the power to canvass.

Today, nobody denies that there was election cheating. The only question is whether the cheating was sidewide and significant to delegitimate the election results.

In May 2001, after the Public Senate at the Supreme Court Centennial, I was asked during the open forum whether Filipinos would have accepted a Bush vs. Gore decision. I said no, I didn't think we would have. I felt that Atienza's decision to step, by "another religion," had proved it. In the days of legitimacy I doubted their due love had become a social religion for us, as if we had clung on to our real religion by which our bishops make prayers to proclaim to us the timeless of heaven.

# A ticking time bomb

ANALYSIS

*Amando Doronila*

THE CAMARAS of the presidential election system have run their course. The entire political process that will lead to a dangerous power vacuum in the midst of congressional custody that will end in a ticking time bomb with a short fuse. They have fitted with chain a few times in recent years and have escaped political disaster by the skin of their teeth, but they should not be lucky that often as they have been.

By midweek, the National Board of Canvassers had opened 137 ballot boxes, more than half of the 227 boxes containing 1.76 certificates of canvass of presidential and vice presidential returns. The canvassers' progress is so slow and so beset by voting, a field of legal issues that should before the canvass can begin.

Two obstacles stand in the way. The first is the delaying action on the floor the opposition is poised to deploy to block no early proclamation. The second is the threat by the opposition to file suit the Supreme Court a petition seeking an injunction to stop Congress from canvassing votes for president and vice president. The petition questions Congress' decision to form a 22-member joint committee to canvass votes and declare the certificates of canvass to argue that the procedure is unconstitutional, saying that only the plenary can canvass the votes.

The issue is the test of the newest procedural questions raised by the opposition that have delayed the start of the canvass. Something that the Court gave the petition priority and expedited a ruling, the action is obliging to delay further the proclamation and bolster opposition claims it is not time to fabricating excuses to arrest a precipitous rush.

Even if Congress can start the canvass by the weekend, as the outlines, the opposition is looking to grab every opportunity to go beyond the tallies of the COCs and examine even the ballots which

The delaying action staged by the opposition in Congress and by the Supreme Court serves the opposition's strategy. The smart talks' creates a destabilizing political atmosphere. It fits into the to proclamation strategy Schaps exactly two time for the opposition to mobilize its partisans in stage a people power movement feeding on alleged cases of irregularities.

The majority leadership in Congress has given the opposition all the latitude to mount delaying actions and to speak on procedural issues. It has not resorted the opposition, but at some point, Congress will have to join the proclamations in a vote and use its numbers, even if this would arouse a walkout by the minority. The majority leadership is losing trouble if it creates the impression it is to stalk with its numbers the urgency of the immediate start canvass and proclamation.

The protracted-earth strategy of the opposition recalls the negotiations over the resignation of deposed President Joseph Estrada after his government collapsed during Edsa II. After the EDSA draft of the resignation documents had been worked out, Estrada objected to the provision in it, on condition that he be given five more days in branching to clear it for the takeover by then Vice President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Mrs Macapagal did not agree to the five days grace after she was sworn in as president. Estrada's objection paved the delay in mobilize a counter people power truck at once. That, the Edsa draft was not signed by him to us.

This episode is not lost on the opposition. It is taking a real front it when it tries to buy time in order to muster another people power demonstration. It might be overestimating its chances of success, and underestimating the capacity of the government to crush a street insurrection and its newfound electoral constituency.

The opposition is better warned that objective conditions do not exist for a new people power uprising. The people are too tired to go back to the streets in response to random calls by clever tacticians.

# 'Benefit factor'

COMMENTARY

*Alice Ancheta*
Institute on Church and Social Issues

ONLY 24 hours after the polling precinct closed on May 10, the elected President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo had assured the country of its not poll cheating. Even Macapagal Arroyo remaining the president by more than eight percentage points over her strongest rival, Fernando Poe Jr. The PNP poll had Chiz getting 40.84 percent of the votes while FPJ trailed her with 31.26 percent.

This snap check of the election results put GMA in a position to claim victory early on. It also helped to convince many that GMA honestly predicted the results of the elections in 1998 and 2001. It was quite logical for her to assume she had won over the other from nowhere.

Still, the exit poll fiasco, doesn't set well at this point. Based on her party's own election results, let her the vote. So, in what happens subsequently than Mercado described as a "two-pronged unprecedented crisis" press conference, PPC representative PPC's Joe Lacson's allegedly failing to deliver the "benefit factor" from the PPC poll claims in his press conference, "Result-wise."

Nevertheless, the exit poll fiasco, boosted by the Hamlet quick-assist showing GMA in the top spot, has simply set the country expecting all more heart of the campaign. Its irony have been not wondering how the happiness given the people's disaffection with GMA on account of her failure to improve the economy.

Columnist Alejandro Bercede provided incisive readers an analysis of "GMA's winning combination" in the May 10 elections. Bercede observed GMA used a strategy based on mass, not on popular lay. In addition with PPJ, who used his charisma to draw supporters to his rallies, GMA used hard pitch, Hollywood cards and street-dwelling jobs in line. Broadly aware of the people's disaffection with GMA, Bercede observed that her government was working hard for the people.

Moreover, she offered the country a future in which she would "create six million jobs, build 1,000 school buildings and three million homes,



achieve sustained self-sufficiency in rice supplies, double funding to small and medium-size enterprises, and provide free irrigation and other services for all," as Time magazine reported. But, however, blurred a bright future for the country with his rogue one line pronouncements on the economy. Thus is, if to had a bright future planned for the country to close it all, it.

Thereafter, the country was in what the one-caller dawn did and the campaign they used. This what made one wrongs work and the other fail also raises questions about the nature of the votes.

PPJ outlined his so-called to-do-before at the onset of the campaign period, which was March 25. The position reporter's report of Gerardo's laudable victory in PPJ's bid for the presidency. The PPJ was poll, however, proved it wrong.

The poll on how Filipinos voted by social class released by GMA also not only won the support of the A, B and E classes but like the masses, also won the Class E classes. But the 41.48 percent from the ABC against PPJ's minimal 20.75 percent. The fight for the B and E votes was done with GMA getting 35.76 percent and 42.08 percent, respectively, compared to PPJ's 30.10 percent and 36.41 percent.

Apparently, the opponents's strategy of recycling the popularity factor was a bad idea. After Edsa II, the people have learned the lesson that they need more than just a popular leader to help them positive challenges in their lives.

According to a study conducted by the Institute on Political and Electoral Reform (IPER) on voter behavior, issues votes demand something proof of the candidate's capability and willingness to help them solve their problems. Thus, an

# If GMA could make these 'ifs' happen

BY SIEGARD «Sig» Dasalla Valencia of Antipolo" (INQ, 5/25/04) says I, as one of the "high blood" pessimists (I am 77 years old but have not left the businessmen) offer the following comments.

Indeed, President Macapagal-Arroyo [illegible] is correct in a sense. She is right in saying that there is no opposition to her economic plans and [illegible] such a supermajority in Congress. But all it can boil down to is a matter of perception. If she can show the people that she is getting results in the form of jobs, then nothing will stop her from [illegible] and [illegible] the 2004 elections.

But all it can boil down to is a matter of perception. If she can show the people that she is getting results in the form of jobs, then nothing will stop her from [illegible] and [illegible] the 2004 elections.

## Opposition knows from its COC copies FPJ lost

THE OPPOSITION will not admit it, but it knows Fernando Poe Jr. lost as the copies of the certificates of Lacson and election results were in its possession since 2:30 a.m. of May 10. So the opposition, the only way [illegible] could have won is by fraud(s) and, ergo, [illegible] is [illegible] the evidence to prove widespread electoral irregularities. Surely, it could have done better than this; and it would have had nothing to fear about [illegible] rules; and it would have had the confidence to push for an [illegible] continue – if Poe had indeed won.

All our elections are tainted with fraud because dirty politicians abound and people who don't know any better allow them to [illegible].

**—CESAR M. DE LOS REYES, cmdlerey@i-manila.com.ph**

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their name, [illegible] address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

# LETTERS

## Families should be based on love

THIS is in reaction to the headline and [illegible] "Families should be based on love" (INQ, 5/22/04) I am a permanent subscriber of this country's No. 1 [illegible] years, I have been [illegible] every morning without hundreds of [illegible] and [illegible] complained daily [illegible] our families.

See all came are couples desire a full and equal marriage in the eyes of the law. But decades, it didn't matter. For now more and more people in our country [illegible] take that as [illegible] "marriage." It is pure and simple human rights which are in jeopardy.

Until lesbians and gay couples have the freedom to marry, the nation's promise of equality for all citizens will remain a broken [illegible].

If we as a society believe that marriage helps build strong families, and that strong families in turn build strong communities, why are those all couples willing to take on mutual commitments and responsibilities to do so? If marriage is good for non-gay people, why wouldn't it be good for gay and lesbian people? Isn't that what equality is all about?

Anything less than full marriage equality is sending the second-class status. As an ordained priest and as a psychologist, I have [illegible] [illegible] people homosexual, and other people's as gay and lesbian and bisexual and transgender. I also believe, as taught by traditions of both, that all of God's creation is good. If we believe that—really believe that—then we must [illegible] [illegible] and love, which is anything less than full equality under the law?

We are human beings. Our families indeed are true families and they are worthy of the same [illegible] [illegible] as can the children of same-sex parents. One will learn first hand that their parents indeed love each other and are faithful to each other and do the [illegible] from [illegible] their values and being up their children to love God and neighbor.

Same-sex marriage has become the hate to other countries. Is this [illegible] living in a democracy? How can it declare, on its own authority and wisdom, that some-sex relationships are an abnormality of human nature? This is not only an insult, it is ignorance.

This much, fortunately, Justice God by administering the law of hate and prejudice for the law of love, a timely element in building a better society, a more peaceful nation.

**—DR. EDWARD B. MESIAT, D.D.Sc., Ph.D. The Order of St. Aelred, Archdiocese of Antipolo Ex., Sinsuyan Meadows, 1130 QC**

## Smut journalism

I MUST express my extreme shock/reading the column of Vic Agoncillo about the two hits, Jolerbo (TFM, 5/11/04).

Has the Inquirer lost all sense of decency and respect for the values that are held dear in this country? Barely nine days after the death of the good presidents and philanthropist Don Enrique Zobel, does man/has redness, —that could very be classified as utter disrespecting as pantalon—reflecting the memory of the deceased.

Agoncillo's column totally runs against the news article of the legend which it announced the passing of Enrique Zobel. How could the same newspaper have published two exactly contrasting accounts of the same man in a span of a few days?

Agoncillo has long been the sore point of the inquirer. In the past, tarnishing the basic tenets of journalism by taking personal sides even on private issues.

**—ALEJANDRO M. LAGUERRE, 76 Mahalagin St., Teachers Village, Quezon City**

## Doubts about the May 10 elections

THE CREDIBILITY of the last elections marred to become doubtful when President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed Benjamin Abalos as the chair of the Commission on Elections. Obviously, the appointment was a payoff for the support Abalos gave Gloria during Edsa II.

This was followed by the hick-ups over the Comelec's modernization program, the Comelec's dubious deal with a company, which led to the loss of millions of pesos of public money, and the subsequent cancellation of the deal. And the pull/body to revert to the manual election system, leaving the Comelec with little time to prepare for the May 10 exercise. Earlier, my first hunch was questioned, the politicos suspected of bias and of attempting to condition the public mind for another round of a Macapagal-Arroyo victory.

Then came May 10 which saw thousands of voters disenfranchised, fraud and violence were employed to choose the progressive party lists to ensure the victory of partido reformista, opportunists and rabid hatchets.

During the counting of ballots, cheating, harassment and violence became more pronounced. Ongoing homes was extensively done against Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, Gabriela and other progressive party lists, more so in their hardholds, and their votes were credited to administration and government-sponsored parties.

Even in the canvassing of votes, cheating history is still being done. Why is it that the third, four, and five hundred a municipality and a municipal town.

It is only right for concerned citizens to air their observations. But things have gone too far. Even the chief administration officials can only accept praises and obsequiously reject criticisms, describing the critical leaders election observers as neighbors who had nothing to do with Philippine elections.

Bayan Muna and Anakpawis have already presented evidence of fraud and filed a case before the Comelec. Here all the destabilization talk the administration is spreading, this and other similar [illegible] are more than enough to [illegible] on. Thus, will government succeed in undermining its own rigged elections. By unprovoking, they are destroying the credibility left of the fair elections.

The elections results will only be accepted by the people when everything is done with transparency and the interests of the [illegible] party.

**—CARL ANTHONY ALS, deputy secretary-general, National Federation of Agrarian Reform Advocates-Youth Sector, Kamias, Quezon City**

## On Dilangalen and shutting up

I MUST admit that I kind of understand Rep. Dilangen (Mangudadatu's) feelings. No one likes to be taken down a notch or two in the presence of his or her peers, especially when that particular "no-one" seems reluctant to acknowledge respect for him.

I don't know how experienced our presidents and other [illegible] ourselves, I don't really need to know much more. For "high and mighty" show-

manship and apparent disdain for the expression of true speech are enough to paint the picture that he is not fit for such a position in public service.

The position of representative is a public office, therefore, he is a public servant. Although Governor Pidio could have been less blunt about her feelings, it does not erase the fact that she was well within her rights to promptly express her feelings to a person who, for the very definition of the term "public servant," is supposed to answer to her, "the public."

It was not Pidio who really insulted him in front of his fellow representatives and senators. Dilangalen read the note we found him and. He dare his own [illegible]. **—Jonathan Dilay, Box 90000, Brownsville, TX 78520, esco.mail**

* * *

Who is the [illegible] Pidio.....sor (Nida) to say that "I'm just echoing what most Filipinos resent"? Stupid assumption. She doesn't echo my sentiments. I resent the right to come out every [illegible] and say "we got that right." Pidio and the [illegible] senators speak for the rest of us, to say the least...the majority of us.—Jessa Jo Mancini, 4 El Libertad Street, Parang City, Marikina, Manila e-mail

* * *

Pidio's note was intended not only for Dilangalen but for all members of Congress. People are fed up with silly debates. Before, our legislators should think of the money from hard-working Filipinos before they are wasting. They should bear in mind that they are not [illegible] [illegible] Filipinos. **—Rolando Delleta, 5104 Lambert St., Williamsburg, VA 23188, via e-mail**

* * *

The very admirable congressman Dilangalen is the kind of elected official that we should have more of in Congress. He was just doing his job as protector of the citizens when he was questioning the credibility of the elections in Basilan province. I am certainly curious in Congress, especially when the [illegible] of canvass appear questionable.

I don't like the reaction of this certain Ms Pidio to the audience, which reflected lack of respect for a congressman whose fault was [illegible] and sincere. We have become a nation of "bigs image Gloria," that we can't see who is wrong or not! I hope Cong go to Congress not just pass a note to Speaker Jose de Venecia telling him, "Honorato, ala ayaw Gloresmi, get lost!." Tim me!!—Carmencita David, Novaliches, Quezon City

* * *

It seems quite obvious that Dilangalen is engaging in debating tactics so as to create even more doubts about the recent elections. Perhaps, he hopes that his party mates can still grab posters. He is wrong, the actions only create more hostility and hardship for our people.

The lady in the gallery was right. Dilangalen should just shut up. He is wasting the people's money.—Emmanuel Amadeo, Metropolitan Avenue, Makati City

* * *

It's my daily routine to read news via the Inquirer's website. Dilangalen here in Dubai just told off whoever he's on. "Shut up," "we always control checks and will check to our interest. "Keep quiet," so much for democracy.

It was absolutely disgusting to see professionals in Congress using "shut up," but since that kind of close were inadvertently influenced by it immediately was The Filipino Channel. Dilangalen should have kept that message to himself. His behavior was sickening and revolting coming as it did from a person of his position.—Ariel Sponcillo, PO Box 47111, Abu Dhabi, UAE

# Dy says he fears for his life …

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at a press conference organized by his camp yesterday at the Diamond Hotel in Manila.

Behind, he sent his half brother, Rep. Faustino III, with lawyers Pete Quiazon and Constante Fontanilla, to explain to reporters that he could not make it because of "disturbances."

Faustino III said his older brother had to increase his security from one to 18 men—six army soldiers and four police officers—and was now using a bullet-proof car.

Reading a statement prepared by his brother, Faustino III urged the nation not to be "deceived" by Padaca's appearance: "Tulong kababayan huwag ang kayang sirain at tinatahing maitim ang pangalan at dangal ng [Dy's family and] ang pulitika ng Isabela. Ito ay isang pulitikan with line). Ako mismo ay inumbrehan ng 18 na tao sa [with] the NPA (New People's Army) connections. Hindi ito [unless is] ng [my] buhay. Ako ay may mga [a] pamilya na [to] ina-alagaan."

## NPA's role?

Fontanilla said Dy's legal team had evidence to prove Padaca's association with the underground.

Quiazon added that Commonwealth Party of the Philippines spokesperson Rep. Roilo Golez's earlier statement in a radio interview that the NPA had supported Padaca.

But Fontanilla admitted that this alleged association was not valid, since it is proven that Padaca indeed campaigned with the communists in barrio voters.

In any case, he said, the NPA's role in the last elections should now be exposed because "what is happening in Isabela could happen to other parts of the country."

Padaca had denied the NPA connection more than once, stating her service record.

"I fought in the regional training school of the Philippine National Police as lecturer for police-media relations at Camp Crame [in Isabela]," she said. "Would the PNP [then] me if I had a history of communist-rebel links?"

Fontanilla was asked why Dy had sought Padaca's disqualification just a day before the election, which was scheduled to be proclaimed—and not before the elections. The lawyer said: "We gathered evidence only [then] on."

Dy national chair of the Nationalist People's Coalition, hinted that the media had "missed the bigger picture" in "exploiting" the issue.

"This is … bigger than any of us," he warned. "It is about national security … about democracy itself."

The statement showed an confusion from the fact that Dy had lost by a wide margin of 44,282 votes.

## Padaca replies

In a phone interview, Padaca snapped back: "Look who's talking about disorder!—those who have all but killed it in Isabela!"

She said previous elections in the province had been no more than "negotiated bid-drugs."

She explained: "They manipulated elections by determining who should run for what position. The people were fed up. In 2001, the PPCRV [Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting] and Namfrel [National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections] lost all interest in guarding the

ISABELA Rep. Faustino Dy III shows his half-brother's statement during a press conference in Manila. (PHOTOGRAPH BY …)

rally of votes."

## Losing hope

At this point, Padaca said, she still wasn't sure of getting justice for herself and those who had voted for her. In fact, she admitted, she was starting to lose hope, especially with President Macapagal-Arroyo's silence on her plight.

"I hope the President speaks up," she said. "This has dragged on too long."

In the afternoon, Dy said that was not the first time that a candidate had agreed to "run, and be used by, the NPA."

The people in the province were so afraid of the communists, he said, that they voted for Padaca against their will.

"I am not greedy for position," the losing candidate stated in Filipino. "I already doing this for [an] will. I don't need this position. Would I risk my life for something I never needed?"

However, Dy said, he could never allow Padaca "or the NPA to destroy my father's legacy."

Faustino Dy Sr. was Isabela governor for 20 years. He ran with congressman for nine years and then governor for three years.

Padaca pointed out: "What about the mandate of the people?"

She said the affidavit that Dy had filed in the Commission on Elections seeking to stop her proclamation implicated her in the tracking of documents in the town halls of San Guillermo and Jones.

## Witness

"That's not true," argued Padaca, adding it was strange that Dy presented as a witness a supposed jailed reporter "whose people are scattered to authorities right after the elections." The witness claimed that she met with NPA rebels in San Guillermo town.

Padaca recalled going to that municipality "just [a] few months to many other people," she said. "How could I have met with the NPA?"

She said the May 22 Comelec order suspending her proclamation was "still not been officially promulgated, and, in fact, "had no room" and was merely "faxed to Isabela."

It's clear that Dy was determined to stop her proclamation despite the wide difference in the local number of votes, Padaca said, reiterating: "He doesn't care about democracy."

# 'Best washes' from Sotto to sweating lawmaker

Front page A1

surrender arrest it in the hand of opposition Sen. Vicente "Tito" Sotto III, who gave it to him.

Add to this the entertainment scene when the gift was presented, and the hand crawl—two and a half feet long and one foot wide—became, according to the receiver, a symbol of goodwill that transcends political affiliations.

On Tuesday afternoon, Zamora broke the tense atmosphere in Congress during the canvassing of votes for president and vice president by volunteering to carry the ballot box to be opened from the room out to the middle of the session hall.

## Sweating out

Zamora recalled that several months ago and a few hours later, when no one else had offered to help, Sotto approached him and said: "Congressman, kamusa ka naman sa ginagawa mo para pumunit ako (I feel sorry for you, Jack, you're sweating)."

The next day, the senator handed him a small shopping bag with the gift, saying he could at least wipe his forehead with it. Zamora promptly slung the white towel around his neck.

"I was touched by the gesture," he told the lawmen during a brief exchange yesterday at his celestial territory in the premises of the House of Representatives in Quezon City.

"Meeting Jack's shorts and naked from the waist up, Zamora boomed: "It's proof that we can be on opposite sides of the political fence and still be friends."

Sotto was the personal campaign manager of actor and presidential challenger Fernando Poe Jr.

ZAMORA: Bout of bonhomie.

## Campanilla votes

Zamora, on the other hand, delivered big time for President Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 polls. The second district of Compostela Valley, which he represents, gave Ms Macapagal 13,000 votes and Poe—"the biggest margin for the entire Region 11," the lawmaker proudly noted.

## Scene-stealer

As for the task he volunteered for at the canvassing, he said he intended to see it through. He said senate's 70 boxes were left unopened—and his entry on his shoulder.

Zamora's scene-stealing act has earned Malacañang's approval.

"The good congressman is just trying to be helpful and trying to be useful," said the Macapagal's spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye.

In contrast, Bunye added, opposition legislators who have been spearheading the canvassing were "trying to set a world record on canvassing" a controversial process. With a report from Juliet de Loche and Jeannette Andrade

# Opposition solons …

Front page A1

and look into the election results when the joint session of Congress would be suspended since the joint canvassing committee exists by itself.

Opposition Reps. Antonio Pama (Negros Oriental) and Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. also stood up to comment that Congress, acting in plenary, should be the one to conduct the canvass and not a select committee.

Senate President Franklin Drilon initially said that Congress could reconvene but he was convinced by Sen. Joker Arroyo.

Arroyo said there were certain questions under which Congress could look into the election returns, one of which was when the votes in a particular COC could at least the result of the election.

Arroyo assured that such effect would only be determined after the joint canvassing committee shall have completed its overall tally and presented the same before a joint session of Congress.

Pimentel continued to press his point and later declared: "I call for the adjournment of the session."

The session was suspended at 6:40 p.m. and resumed at 9:35.

Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez Cabinet, Eladio Cayt said the session will resume at 1:30 today.

Barring any last-minute hitches, the remaining 14 CoCs will be tallied.

"If I were to be followed, canvassing should start immediately tomorrow (today)," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez acknowledged that Congress may decide to place on the back of the canvassing on Monday.

Yesterday's proceedings were almost uninterrupted, with opposition Rep. Diligen Dilangalen of Maguindanao one of the few to hold out most of the time. Dilangalen retired at the hall at 12 a.m.

Before the joint session resumed at 3 p.m., House Majority Leader Sigmund Gonzales said he had asked Dilangalen if they could start at 2:30 p.m. despite the lack of a quorum, in order to complete the opening of the remaining CoCs.

Gonzales said Dilangalen had refused at first, saying they should at least wait until 4 p.m. or until there was a quorum.

But upon his insistence, Gonzales said, Dilangalen yielded on the condition that they wait for his guru, who arrived before 3 p.m.

Dilangalen said the Senate had requested him to refrain from raising the question of a quorum every time he noticed the lack of it.

## Auditors

Elaborating on the opposition's planned proposal, Arquiza said report has that all Congress needed more auditors or accountants to do the actual tallying of votes.

Asked who would make up the tabulators, he said: "It can be any firm of auditors or a recognized group of accountancy."

He also said the lawmakers would remain on the floor to take part in the process. "Our participation will be in the tabulation."

Arquiza said other minority lawmakers have supported the creation of the 22-member joint committee mainly made up of senators and congressmen who are known supporters of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In his petition to the Supreme Court to stop the joint committee from taking over the canvass. (See story on Page A1.)

## Physical condition

Meanwhile, reports on the physical condition of the CoCs and the statements of votes (SoVs) have taken up much of the joint canvass.

Wednesday's session ended on an embarrassing note with two ballot boxes from Antigon del Sur found empty. Administration lawmakers later said the missing documents had actually been misplaced in the confusion.

On Tuesday, two ballot boxes from Camarines Norte lacked their CoC. (Story on Page A1.)


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# Big oil price increases likely next week

Previous page A1

of diesel by 30 centavos.

Oil firms again raised their prices on Feb. 2—by 60 centavos for gasoline and 30 centavos for diesel.

The following month, gasoline prices rose by 50 centavos per liter. But diesel prices remained unchanged.

On April 19, gasoline prices increased by 30 centavos per liter. Again, diesel prices were maintained.

### Biggest increase

The last and so far biggest increase for the year took place on May 15, or five days after the national and local elections. Pump prices of both gasoline and diesel went up by P1 per liter.

Petron and Shell are raising their prices in response to high Dubai crude prices, while the new players are adjusting their pump prices to reflect the rise in the cost of finished products.

The benchmark Dubai crude hit an average of $36.74 per barrel in May, an increase of $3.06 from the April average of $33.68 per barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for finished products soared in an average of $49.71 per barrel in May from $46.09 per barrel in April.

MOPS-based diesel registered an average price of $44.62 per barrel in May from $44.61 per barrel the month before.

### Similar increases

Consequently, the refiners and the new players could implement similar increases for both gasoline and diesel because they set the prices of their products based on the behavior of the local market and the movement of international prices.

### No signs of letting up

"The likely scenario is that the new players will follow the price increases of Shell and Petron of P1.25 per liter for gasoline, while Shell and Petron will follow the price increase of the new players of 60 centavos for diesel," he said in a statement.

Consequently, said international prices showed no sign of letting up soon enough, judging from the current price trends.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries had a crucial meeting yesterday to decide on whether to boost its daily output to mitigate rising international prices.

The increase in demand for gasoline and diesel in the United States due to the summer driving season and the attacks on oil installations in the Middle East would continue to keep international prices up, Consuegra said.

### Fear factor

Estimates vary, but some economists said as much as $10 to $15 was being added to the cost of every barrel of crude oil because of fear that terror in Saudi Arabia, violence in Iraq or unrest elsewhere could disrupt future oil supplies. They say there's still plenty of oil available.

A "fear premium" is driving up US gasoline prices until past $2 a gallon (3.8 liters).

Motorists may "be paying as much as 30 cents a gallon more at the pump because of the petroleum industry's anxiety that terrorism might disrupt oil supplies, a fear that increased with two munitions campaigns by al-Qaida gunmen on oil compounds in the heart of Saudi Arabia.

### Khobar attack

The fear factor went up a notch over the weekend with the attack in Khobar, Saudi Arabia, that killed 22 people, including three Filipinos. It was the second attack in a month against oil workers in the Islamic kingdom.

Oil prices surged more than $2 a barrel Tuesday, the first trading day since the Khobar attack. The price of gasoline jumped 6 cents a gallon on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

"These obviously is a fear premium," said Seth Kleinman, an oil market analyst at PFC Energy, a Washington-based consulting firm. While there always has been such a premium in oil prices, with the reopening of Saudi's oil industry, "$35 godsa, a lot further, and it's gonna a lot bigger."

One reason is that Saudi Arabia, which pumps 10 percent of the world's oil, is the only producer that has significant spare capacity to produce more as needed to stem demand and prices, economists said.

### Psychological impact

While the attacks did not target Saudi pipelines, terminals or oil fields directly, the psychological impact has rattled the markets.

After unveiling assessthat last week, the price of light crude for July delivery jumped $2.48, settling Tuesday at a record $42.33 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. With a report from AP

## Miriam tells . . .

From page A1

"Lilimas din ang ulap (The clouds will clear)," Poe on Wednesday told 200 supporters who burst into thunderous applause at the Plaza Leticia Restaurant in Cabanatuan City.

The scene may have erased the "ulap" (cloud) with "langit" (sky), but his supporters nonetheless took it to mean that their candidate would eventually be proclaimed the winner of the May 10 presidential election.

Senator Alert Miriam Defensor-Santiago, however, had a message for the standard bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP). She told Poe on Thursday that he will find that silver lining not in the Philippines but in some faraway land.

"I recommend that he (Poe) immigrate to another country and run for president there," said Santiago, who lost in the 1992 presidential election and now serves as legal counsel of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Santiago's tantrix came a day after a break in the swollen allowed Poe to helicopter to Cabanatuan and provided him with an all-ti to prop up a gathering of KNP campaign leaders and supporters in Nueva Ecija.

In his five-minute speech to his supporters, Poe said he was not conceding defeat and that he was willing "to pass through the eye of a needle for the sake of the people's will."

The KNP claims Poe won by a million votes over the Macapagal-Arroyo camp claims she beat the actor by a similar margin.

### Where FPJ scored highest

Poe, who was accompanied by fellow actor Eddie Garcia in his helicopter flight from the Subic Bay Freeport in Zambales, told his supporters that he was glad the overcast skies had cleared and allowed him to thank them in person.

Of the country's 79 provinces, it was in Nueva Ecija where Poe scored his biggest margin over Mr. Macapagal. According to the Comelec count in Nueva Ecija, Poe won over Mr. Macapagal by 105,781 votes.

"Sus! Lumayaw ang ulap. Ayan nga pa sa akin ang sa atin. Buwan din ang ulap. It was a good thing the clouds cleared. I hope that in the next few days, the clouds will clear," he said.

Poe said he was going around the country to explain what he was fighting for. "It's not the presidency that is at stake here but it's the will of the people that I am fighting for," he said.

Poe said he had the "mandate" (support) to pursue his fight, although he didn't explain what it was.

The scene arrived at the restaurant at 3:50 p.m. After photo-sessions with his supporters, who came from different towns and cities of Nueva Ecija, he left at 4:20 p.m.

Bong Revilla, who was introduced as provincial coordinator of Ejército in Region 3 (Central Luzon) told Poe's supporters that copies of video documentaries detailing alleged massive fraud in the last elections would be distributed nationwide "so that the people would properly be informed."

### No age limit

Santiago, however, had several pieces of advice for Poe, whose allies in the Senate and the House of Representatives want to scrap the canvassing of votes for the presidential and vice presidential races.

"If he feels he was cheated like I did in 1992, he can cry out in private," she told reporters covering the canvassing by Congress at the Batasan Pambansa in Quezon City.

Or, the feisty lawmaker continued, Poe can always go back to making movies. "There is no age limit for making movies," she said.

Wearing a yellow shirt and blazer, Santiago advised Poe to file a formal protest in the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, which is composed of all the justices of the Supreme Court.

"He wants the check to stop while he pursues his own political ambitions ... He does not have the presidential patience to file a presidential electoral protest," she said.

### Homicidal

Santiago lost the 1992 presidential election to Fidel Ramos by a margin of about 800,000 votes and filed a protest in the Presidential Electoral Tribunal. The tribunal decreed her protest dismissed when she ran for a Senate seat in 1995.

"What I am warning Mr. Poe ... that he can't run for the Senate because if he does, he is considered to have abandoned his protest," she said.

Reflecting on her experience in 1992, Santiago said that she "felt homicidal that I lost."

"But nobody ever said that life is fair," she added.

# SPORTS

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TORRES takes off in her record-breaking triple jump

# Torres sets RP record

By Marc Anthony Reyes

A FIL-AMERICAN finally struck gold over on Marianville Torres triumphed again with a record triple jump yesterday in the National Open Invitational track and field championships at the Rizal Memorial Stadium.

Esther Torres, a 6-foot-1 from Long Beach, California, whose great grandfather is a Filipino, won the men's 400 meters, beating two-time Southeast Asian Games champion Jimie Castañares with a time of 49.26 seconds.

Torres produced the third 10 meter in as many days at the topped the women's triple jump with a leap of 13.67 m. Torres, the winner of the women's long jump Wednesday, raised the old mark of 12.50 set in 2001 by Teresita Dioken, who died of cancer last year.

Athletics chief Go Teng Kok recommended the inclusion of the 26-year-old Pinoy in the national squad.

Mary Grace Melgar became the first athlete to win three gold after ruling the women's 400 hurdles in 1:00.06. Eduardo Buenaventa added the men's 5,000m to his earlier win in the 10,000, clocking 14:0.9.27.

The duty, 5-foot-10 Abigail from La Union also won the 400m and was part of the winning women's 4x100 relay team that included Jobi Rose Kobia, Mona Ramona and Elma Muros-Posadas, who hinted a comeback from retirement for the 2005 SEAG.

Hong Kong-China's (the Yu hurdler) Dhaiqin-bound Lamia Sakuntan-Gabito in the women's 100 m dash. She clocked 11.89 seconds while Gabito was second in 11.95.

# DLSU spikers prevail

By Trina Roxas

DE LA Salle University capitalized on the Ateneo University's errors in the fourth set to prevail, 25-15, 25-17, 19-25, 25-19, yesterday for its first win in the Shakey's V-League Women's Volleyball Tournament at the Lyceum Gym.

La Salle now carries a 1-1 win-loss card, behind leaders UST (2-0), Letran and San Sebastian (1-0), while FEU fell to a 0-2 record along side host Lyceum.

As the Lady Thirsters rallied behind y 21-16 deficit, crucial service errors by Mary Diane Torres and Mary Ann Manalo gifted the Lady Archers with the winning points in the final set. Del La Salle suffered an opening day setback to University of Santo Tomas.

Carmina Cruz and Michelle Suarez led the Lady Archers' assault in the fourth set, where FEU's defense took a bulwark off person marathon by the hard-hitting La Salley duo for the 11 blocks.

San Sebastian College bucked a first set loss to save bank rival Letran College, 23-25, 25-12, 25-18, 25-21, in the second game and share the lead with University of Santo Tomas.

The Knights had a chance to force a fifth set but Letran's rookie Mirasol Pennisi connected on seven, allowing the Lady Stags to seize match point and take their second straight win in as many matches.

# US NCAA five ready to play

By Jane Navarro

THE ALL-AMERICAN team made up of US NCAA dribblers has agreed to play in the quarterfinals of the Philippine basketball association Fiesta Conference.

Now, it's up to the pro league if it wants to see these US collegiate players in action.

Player-agent Danny Espiritu confirmed yesterday that Maryland's Juan Dixon, one of the all-American selection, had readily accepted the PBA offer and were assured that his players are ready even if the games were to be held next week.

"In fact, coach Dixon has already notified his boys about the development and they are ready to segregate and start practicing within the week," Espiritu told the INQUIRER.

However, a reliable source said the league is torn between bringing the NCAA selection over and inviting the Pennsylvania Valley lineup of player-agent Sam Osaro as the second foreign reinforcement after the Canada-based University of British Columbia Thunderbirds.

As PBA stars Benj Mcarre and Vince Hizon are part of the Milkyday.ngs team Jose Navarro

# *Ordonio is Filipino–DOJ*

By Philip C. Tubeza

ORDONIO

JONATHAN Ordonio, who is playing for the Rizal PBA team, is a Filipino citizen, the Department of Justice said yesterday.

Acting Justice Secretary Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez said the DOJ has upheld in July 2000 Ordonio's claim to dual citizenship.

Gutierrez did not reveal the NBC recommendation, although NBI principal Chief Romeo Dino earlier said that the architect had written the bureau to inform it that Ordonio was an American citizen.

"Upon a careful and meticulous review of the documents submitted in support of the petition for recognition as a Filipino citizen vis-à-vis the findings of [the Board in question], we find no cogent reason to disturb the department's previous findings on the matter," Gutierrez said of Ordonio.

While Ordonio was born in Bellflower, California, USA, on March 21, 1979, he may be deemed a citizen of the Philippines since his mother, Geneven, was a Filipino citizen, Gutierrez added.

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# High court en banc hears stop-canvass case today

From page A1

"The members of the opposition are striking a world record in countervailing democracy," Banquerigo said in a statement. "We pray that they will come to their senses before they are completely isolated by the growing impatience of the public."

Commenting on the 20-page petition for mandamus and prohibition that Rep. Ruy Elias Lopez (NPC, Davao City) filed on Wednesday, Senator-elect Miriam Defensor-Santiago said in protest: "My first impulse as a professor of constitutional law for 18 years was that [their] basic concerns were too operating when they doubted that kind of petition."

### Brain neurons

"Boy, are they wrong," said Santiago, who ran for senator under the administration coalition's K-4. "Where were they in the time of statutory construction? What were their brain neurons doing?"

But stalwarts of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (Koalisyon of United Filipinos) remain unfazed.

Sen. Edgardo Angara, principal backer of KNP-standard bearer Fernando Poe Jr., said the opposition considered Santiago's comments just "one person's legal opinion."

"Our sole reading is that canvass must be done by Congress itself and not by a committee, and Congress itself and not the committee must first ascertain the authenticity and the execution of the certificates of canvass. Definitely's the very issue put before the Supreme Court," Angara told reporters.

### Impartial

Enrile said that while Congress had approved the rules creating the joint committee, Malacañang would "respect any ruling handed down by the Supreme Court, whose integrity and impartiality have always been beyond question."

But he added: "I believe the general perception of the public is one of impatience rather than one of tolerance for the process."

In the petition, Lopez asked the tribunal to issue a temporary restraining order to stop the canvass by the 22-member joint committee, and to declare unconstitutional the rules that created it.

He also asked the high court to order both the Senate and the House of Representatives to open, authenticate and tabulate the COCs with the participation of all members of Congress.

Named respondents in the case were Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, and the chief financial and budget officers of the two chambers of Congress.

Drilon and De Venecia had earlier expressed confidence that the high court would throw out the petition.

Acting Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez echoed their views, stating the supremacy of powers among the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government should be respected.

### 'Fundamentalistic'

Senator-elect Santiago said that's all there was to it because for the filing of an "internal tribunal" before the Supreme Court.

She said the KNP was seeking to enforce her fundamental constitutional principle of equal protection, and was adopting a "fundamentalistic" interpretation of the 1987 Constitution.

According to Santiago, the Constitution has two provisions on the canvass of the results of the presidential election that must be taken in context: that Congress is mandated to canvass the results, and that Congress has the power to adopt its own canvassing rules.

She pointed out that a joint or select committee had been designated to canvass the results of previous elections.

Santiago also took a swipe at Poe, saying there was no reason why the movie star, "just because he is in the habit of riding horses," should be treated as a special case.

### Fair rules

Angara, however, said it was better for everyone to wait for the Supreme Court to decide on Lopez's petition.

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., who was ticketed under the KNP, said, "We don't want the rules to favor either Mr. Poe or the President ... We only want the rules to be fair."

He said that with no petition, the opposition could "get to the bottom of any reported anomaly [in connection with] the count by the presidency and vice president."

He also said the opposition was seeking for outstanding rules that would provide "a level playing field as far the canvassing body being done in Congress is concerned."

Ty Santiago's remark that the high court would not intervene as the internal rules promulgated by Congress, Pimentel said the issue being raised by lawyers to attack down the impeachment rules adopted by the House during the recent last year of a number of young congressmen is impeach Chief Justice Davide.

Pimentel said the Supreme Court did strike down the "impeachment" rules [in the Davide case], I suppose the court can also do it here—strike down a rule that is not fair," Pimentel said.

### Null and void

Malabon Judge Buenaventura Flores, who is under suspension, yesterday lodged his case petition for the high court to go beyond Lopez's plea and declare the May 10 elections null and void for alleged widespread fraud.

Flores also asked the tribunal should order the Commission on Elections to conduct special presidential polls. "Na niadya'y sabe," and Congress to expedite the canvassing of the votes for vice president.

The canvassing, he said, would result in the victory of Mrs. Arroyo's running mate, Noli de Castro.

### 'Acting president'

He asked the tribunal to allow De Castro to take the oath as vice president and be sworn in and serve as acting president until the results of the special presidential election are known.

Flores was suspended by the Supreme Court four years ago by reason of his refusal to resign the standard rules for judges and his "predictions" on various issues. *With reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana and Christine O. Avendaño*

CONFETTI galore rains on Senator-elect Richard Gordon during his thanksgiving victory bash on Tuesday night at the MBC Tent, The Fort, in Makati City. ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER

# Missing certificates blamed on Senate

From page A1

constitutions cover the counting CoC from Cotabato Town.

The CoC was not inside either of the two ballot boxes submitted by the provincial board of canvassers to the Senate. The boxes were classified "three-layer numbers (R) and (R) 4 in the series of thirteen containers.

A security official said the loss of the CoC would not have happened in the House of Representatives where the ballot boxes containing the election returns (ERs) are directly delivered from the Senate on May 25.

"Anyone who attempts to steal any box will have to bring out all the boxes. So it's impossible for ballot box switching to happen here," Andrew Valte, House deputy sergeant at arms, said.

Stating his previous stance in a resolution, all 229 ballot boxes bearing 178 CoCs are guarded round the clock like a national treasure.

(The number of ballot boxes and CoCs rose from 200 and 176, respectively, with the late arrival of the ballot boxes from Catabato City and Lanao del Sur, where the local canvassing of votes were held up by controversy and the holding of special elections.)

Twenty minutes after the guard is changed every night to signal the end of the joint public session of Congress, men in burning flagbearing shirts the metal chairs remember rate it passes under the handles on the lid of the ballot boxes.

### Closed-circuit TV

"Besides, any potential intruder will have to contend with three layers of security backed by a closed-circuit TV all watching on. 24-hour basis," said Capt. Gervacio Nabiquilan, security officer of the Legislative Security Bureau of the Senate.

Anyone who wants to approach the ballot boxes will either have to rapel down from the third gallery of plunge some 30 feet and face possible death, Valte said.

### Drilon accused

Magsaysay-Sen. Ralgan B. Angeles last accused the Office of Senate President Franklin Drilon of "opening the padlocked ballot box to before they were transported from the Senate to the House, in violation of the rules and guidelines to the transfer of the COCs and election returns."

Drilon's office fought back over the against instructions it had anything to do with the missing CoCs.

Senate officials took pains in explaining that it was the Comelec of Sen. Ivana Cotabato Town who opened the two ballot boxes one of which would have contained the CoC from Cotabato. None when the turned them over to the Senate in the early hours of May 13.

Drilon had turned to ask the Comelec to let the members of the board of canvassers of Cotabato Town, including Cuello, explain why the CoC was missing.

### Dilangalen misinformed

Senate Secretary Oscar Yabes said it was "unfair" to blame the Senate for the missing CoC.

In a statement, Yabes said Dilangalen was misinformed when he stated that Drilon or the Senate removed the padlock and opened the ballot boxes containing the CoC.

Yabes showed a 20-minute video footage taken by the Senate on the turnover of the two ballot boxes from Cotabato Comelec.

Officials indicated that the Senate had no way of knowing whether the CoC was indeed inside the ballot boxes when they were turned over to them.

The Senate had validated that the turnover of all 229 ballot boxes containing 178 CoCs from polling centers nationwide and abroad.

In the video footage, Yabes said it was clearly shown that Cuello was the one who removed over the ballot boxes at around 4:28 p.m. of May 13.

Yabe showed Cuello opening the padlock of the ballot box as lawyer Norma Dumayas, head of the Senate committee legal, described the condition of the ballot boxes, including their serial numbers.

"This was all done in the presence of the Senate committee team as well as lawyers of the proclaimed candidates, including the lawyer for Fernando Poe Jr.

"The Office of the Senate President or the committee teams did not, at any time, open any of the ballot boxes," Yabes said in a statement.

### Only ministerial

"The committee teams only performed a ministerial job of receiving the ballot boxes, keeping them and later delivering them to the proper session of Congress, in the case of the National Board of Canvassers, for actual canvassing," he said.

On the video, it was shown that inside the ballot box was a "bulky" brown envelope where the CoC and statement of votes should have been.

Then Chairman showed the envelope to the lawyers present and later placed those back in the ballot box.

"We don't open the envelope," said Yabes. He said it was Congress that opened the envelope.

"That's why when we record this, we are the envelope purportedly contains a CoC because we do not know this as a matter of fact," the Senate secretary said.

In the Comelec, Cuello told reporters that when she delivered the boxes to the Senate, three were opened and their contents were checked by Senate representatives.

After examination, the ballot boxes and serial numbers were duly recorded in the official receipt which was given to her.

One box, according to the tough, unnamed Senate CoC and Chi't from the municipalities of Cotabato Town, while the other contained 32 belts by provincial which came from the 12 municipalities of the province.

"The CoC envelope is in good condition ... The envelope appears to be bulky and in good condition," the Senate representative said in her statement regarding the status of the missing CoC.

### Satisfied

President Macapagal-Arroyo was satisfied with the explanations made by Drilon on the missing COC, said her spokesperson Ignacio Bunye.

"The President would like to clear this matter entirely in the hands of the joint session, that is their prerogative and I have no comment and draw whatever mental problems they have," Bunye said.

### Monitors movements

Pelon and Valdepeñas said yesterday that this did not happen at Del Gonzo.

Pelon said the ballot boxes were scrutinized after the end of each session before the senator hall was padlocked for the night. The ballot boxes were examined again in the morning before the session hall was opened to the public.

"Nobody can go near the chamber [ballot boxes] during the night. The lights are on and the camera is focused on the ballot boxes," he explained.

The first and second galleries were also padlocked and reliably sealed, Valdepeñas said.

Alongside the ballot boxes on the third gallery, a team also monitors movement or the presence of intruders in the parking areas, stairways, lifters and lounge areas.

One member is barred solely on the long line of police ballot boxes arranged before the Speaker's rostrum.

Soldiers who plan to stay behind in the session hall after the day's proceedings are bound to fail, according to Valdepeñas.

After the close of session, employees and ordinary reports check under tables and chairs for any items left behind by the legislators and guests. *With a report from Juliet Labog-Javellana*

A HOPEFUL of the House security force keeps watch round-the-clock over the ballot boxes at the session hall. ARNOLD ALMACEN

# Pimentel shows . . .

From page A1

boasting the pictures of Senator-elect Manuel Roxas II, who ran under the administration coalition.

He said the botched scene was procured by Filipinas Water Handling Co. based in Boiling, Cavite.

But a check he made showed that the company was a subsidiary of Republic Flour Mills, whose president happens to be Jesse Ma. Castanares, the son of the Namfrel chief.

Pimentel said the was a "small smoking gun" that showed Gonzalez was for Ms Macapagal.

"Certainly, it puts into the question the honesty underlay of Mr. Castanares that he is acting as a neutral observer of the PE [plus some are], therefore, qualified to run Namfrel," he said.

Pimentel said he did not know for a fact whether Gonzalez had entered into a government contract to manufacture the botched seats.

At Sr Luz, he said the Namfrel secretary general had made statements favoring Ms. President during the election campaign.

"All these circumstances would indicate that Namfrel cannot be trusted to present to the people an unbiased report on the results of the elections," Pimentel said.

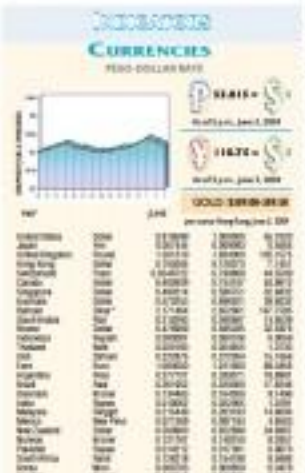
The senator said he was also against the quick count of the presidential and vice presidential votes so that would "add to the confusion of the people," given that Gonzalez was expected to cast its own canvass of the votes for the country's two top leaders by today.

# BUSINESS

Lito Raul O. Morales
Assistant Editor Carrie S. Mariano

Challenge

# Oil firms snap up dollars; peso skids




By Doris C. Dumlao

AN UPSURGE in global oil prices to record highs weighed on the peso yesterday as jittery oil companies snapped up dollars to beef up their reserves.

Trading volume at the Philippine Dealing System swelled to $203 million yesterday from Wednesday's $169 million, with the peso weakening to 56.83:1 to $1 from the previous day's close of 55.795.

Currency traders said the sharp increase in the trading volume and the peso's weakening were brought about by the higher demand for dollars from oil companies, which were scrambling more expensive cost of oil imports.

"But a rebound is being met by sometimes by OFW (overseas Filipino workers) remittances and investment inflows," said BSP governor Rafael Buenaventura, who is confident that the peso will remain stable.

The BSP chief said the rising oil prices was not a threat to the local currency over the near term as demand would be stopped in its tracks because of strong foreign exchange inflows.

"I think there's enough supply. This is a good seasonal factor," Buenaventura said.

Inflows are seasonally stronger in the second quarter compared to the first, as OFWs remit more funds for tuition fee and other educational expenses in time for the opening of the school year in June.

The BSP chief said the peso dollar exchange rate was still relatively stable that the central bank had even been able to purchase dollars recently from the spot currency market.

Oil prices on the international market shot up to a 21-year high of $42.45 per barrel Wednesday following terrorist attacks by the Saudi cell of Al Qaeda, which claimed more that the attacks would destabilize global oil supply.

Buenaventura said he did not expect global oil prices to stay at these high levels. He said the government's economic managers were still assuming that oil prices would average lower at $33 per barrel, although this was already adjusted from the previous estimate of $27 per barrel.

Despite the possible secondary impact on wages and transport fares, Buenaventura said the rising oil prices should not be a big threat to the domestic economy.

"We're no longer totally dependent on oil imports," Buenaventura said, noting that the country had been able to tap other energy sources such as hydro and geothermal energy.

In the meantime, BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said there had been no

## BSP keeps key rates steady

THE MONETARY board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday kept overnight interest rates unchanged for the 11th straight month despite inflationary pressure arising from increasing oil prices.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor and Monetary Board Chair Rafael Buenaventura said inflation pressure remained manageable. He however, admitted that the inflation rate next year would likely exceed the government's 4 percent to 5 percent target range.

The central bank has not touched its benchmark rates since a cut of 25 basis points to 6% by 2003 that matched a similar move by the US Federal Reserve. The bank's overnight borrowing rate is 6.75 percent and its lending rate is 9.0 percent.

"The latest assessment by the MB suggests that the outlook for inflation in 2004 remains consistent with the above 4-5 percent inflation target for the year," Buenaventura said after the BSP's monthly meeting on policy rate setting.

"However, supply-side factors such as transport cost adjustments, utility charge increases and rising energy prices constitute to downward the risks to the outlook for inflation for 2005 and point to a possible upward in average inflation to a level higher than the 4-5 percent target," he explained.

But the BSP chief explained that the expected inflationary pressures on the policy horizon would not represent permanent shifts in the long-run consumer price path and therefore "should not require a monetary policy response." The BSP thus decided yesterday to keep its key policy interest rates unchanged.

The board likewise saw no need to adjust the reserves requirement on banks. As a preemptive response to the widening from the peso-dollar volatility, the BSP increased last February the liquidity reserve requirement on peso deposits and deposit substitutes of banks and non-banks with quasi-banking functions by 2 percentage points.

The BSP sees an inflation rate-targeting model in setting its overnight policy rates, which in turn, are used by banks as benchmark in pricing their own lending.

At the same time, the BSP believes that the overall likelihood of significant downward pressure on consumer prices developing in the near term remains low given continued evidence of double-digit unemployment, spare manufacturing and modest bank loan growth," Buenaventura said.

"Indeed, the MB is of the opinion that the continuing patterns of sluggish credit demand

## Gov't seeks $400M in WB, JBIC loans

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT is seeking loans worth $400 million from the World Bank and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation to pursue a program that will remediate the ailing public finance sector.

According to the Department of Finance, the loans will be used to undertake reforms in the public sector, which is dragged by poor revenue collection and huge expenses, so that the government may increase revenues and invest in expenditure requirements.

"The program will include administrative measures that we will be pushing to enhance revenue generation," said a finance official.

The finance official said the World Bank and JBIC were expected to extend $200 million each.

The program for the public finance sector includes the rationalization of the work process at the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the enhancement of its large taxpayer unit. The de-

# PLDT, AT&T extend deal on termination rates

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. and American phone firm AT&T have agreed to extend until yearend a compromise deal on termination rates which is set to expire by the end of the month.

PLDT entered into an interim agreement on termination rates with MCI and Sprint ONA in November last year, and with AT&T in January. Termination rates are what foreign carriers pay to complete calls on the network of local carriers like PLDT.

**The agreement with Sprint** would also expire by the end of the month, while the deal with MCI has to expire by June 30. PLDT said it would hold negotiations with Sprint officials in the coming weeks to extend the interim agreement.

The last-extended compromise agreement would ensure the smooth flow of traffic on PLDT and SBC International, even as both parties continue to negotiate a mutually acceptable rate.

The interim agreement forged by Philippine carriers like PLDT with their US counterparts would also allow domestic telecom firms to collect unpaid dues. PLDT collected early this year about $8 million to correct the termination fees from US carriers.

Alfredo Panlilio, PLDT senior vice president, said the two parties were pleased to have entered the agreement as both "contribute to explore ways to reach mutually beneficial solutions without disrupting services."

Philippine carriers have been under fire from their US counterparts after they unilaterally raised termination rates in February 2003 to 13 US cents per minute from 8 US cents for landline calls, and to 20 US cents per minute from 12 US cents for mobile phone calls.

The United States government had accused Philippine carriers of behaving like a cartel. A US grand jury is studying an anti-trust case against the local carriers.

"This is a welcome development for both parties," said Panlilio. "It just showed the desire of both PLDT and AT&T to ensure the best service for customers at the best prices. With this new interim agreement, we have a stable basis for the rates we charge them."

PLDT said Philippine and US regulators have been helping the carriers come up with a reasonable rate scheme to ensure the viability of the phone companies while protecting consumer rights.

The bilateral treaty allows the Philippine justice department, on behalf of the US court, to conduct a preliminary investigation on the alleged anti-competitive practices of telecom carriers.

According to Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez, one of the features of MLAT is that it protects Filipino citizens and entities from "US prosecutions, police agents and courts," who are out to collect evidence by "unconstitutional means."

"This [features] would be considered useless if we allow prosecutors of evidence through ex-parte process-fact scans, [subpoena of documents]," Gutierrez told the National Telecommunications Commission.

The US grand jury has compelled Philippine telecom companies to submit documents crucial to their operations and could jeopardize the local carriers.

Thirty Philippine telecom executives are facing federal grand jury probe for alleged anti-trust. They were issued subpoenas when attending the Pacific Telecommunications Council conference in Hawaii in January.

The US-Philippine route is the fourth-largest international route based on outgoing US calls. More than 1 million Filipinos work in the US, making the call traffic very busy.

# Security Bank eyes higher revenue target for '04

SECURITY Bank expects to surpass its 2004 net revenue target of 20 percent after the bank posted a net income of P378 million for the first four months of the year, according to Alfonso L. Salcedo Jr., Security Bank Corp. president and chief executive officer.

Villarosa said that the figure is 24 percent higher than the P223 million registered in the same period last year. He added that the bank has also surpassed its 2004 income target, which targeted an annualized return on equity to 6.1 percent from the 6.4 percent earned in 2003.

"SBC's strong performance could be attributed to the continued growth of the customer, corporate and investment banking businesses, and gains in operational efficiency," he said.

The bank's efforts to generate more business and better spreads, as well as collection efforts on past-due loans, have contributed to the bank's interest differential income for the first four months of the year by 49 percent compared to the same period last year.

SBC has continued setting aside provisions for covering its non-performing assets. Provisions for the first four months of the year amounted to P100 million, more than the P80 million in provisions set aside for the same period in 2003. The bank's NPL ratio remains at a strong 3% percent, translating to an NPL ratio of 0.4 percent, one of the lowest in the industry.

The bank's stockholders endorsed the following as Board of Directors for 2004-05: Jr. by chairman Alfonso L. Salcedo Jr. and Philip T. Ang, Jesus O. Garcia Jr., Lucio L. Co, Stephen T. Du, Ang Jo Hong, Antonio T. Ng, Gabriel C. Singson, Antonio T. Ty, Jose R. Facundo, Jaime Ait Ang, Jose Ferdinand M. Lerma, Eduardo J. Pacis, Rafael F. Simpao Jr. and Alberto S. Villarosa as members.

## *Water concessionaires urge MWSS to withdraw opex tax directive*

By Christine Gaylican

THE MANILA Water Company Inc. (MWCI) and Maynilad Water Services Inc. (MWSI) are urging the government to withdraw the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to withdraw its notice directing the concessionaires to determine tax payments based on tariff rate settings.

The concessionaires claim that the MWSS directive could lead to a tariff rollback.

The MWCI and MWSI submitted separate papers to the MWSS Regulatory Office (MWSS-RO). Both claimed that the regulator has no basis in applying the Supreme Court ruling to their case since they are not classified as utilities with an official franchise.

"The (high court)-decision in the Meralco case concerned a public utility. Our company is not a public utility subject to a rate base but a mere "agent" and "contractor" of MWSS, under the Concession Agreement's (Article 2.1.1)," said Antonino T. Aquino, MWCI president.

In its paper, the MWSI also said that in the approved October 2002 Business Plan income tax payments are considered expenditures.

The company also noted that, unlike Meralco which used the rate of return base (ROEB), the water firms determine the rate of return through the computation of the weighted average cost of capital (WACC) that treats income taxes as part of expenditures.

MWCI, a subsidiary of the Ayala group, said in its petition that the MWSS should reconsider its directive as the company would have no other course but to resort to a "legal remedy." The case is to be considered case to be filed before the International Chamber of Commerce.

According to ABWSA-BG officials, they based their directive on a provision of the Concession Agreement, which states that it (there is a change in the law or government regulations on utility firms, it would be adopted as it directly affects the cash flow of the concessionaire.

The MWSS-Regulatory Office said that with the recent ruling of the Supreme Court disallowing the use of corporate income tax in determining rates, the said provision has become relevant.

"We are prepared to present the merits of this case," Eduardo Ramos, MWSS chief regulator, said during an interview.

# Oil firms ...

Please page B2

significant increases in the rate by all companies of the BSP's currency rate protection program (CRPP).

"The CRPP is a hedging mechanism against foreign exchange volatility, not rising oil prices. The exchange rate is still relatively stable," he said.

The CRPP facility is a zero-deliverable forward contract (NDF) between the BSP and commercial banks with the foreign exchange obligations of bank clients as the underlying transaction.

The hedging facility was introduced by the BSP when the Asian currency turmoil erupted in 1997 to ease the pressures created by market players wanting to transact their forex foreign currency requirements and by borrowers wanting to cover foreign currency obligations that have yet to mature.

The CRPP is available to companies of a specific amount of good at a specific price for settlement at a future date. In the case of NDFs, the settlement is in pesos and covers only the net difference between the contracted forward rate and the prevailing spot rate or maturity.

# Model support for swine industry

EDGARD M. ORDANEZ

WE COMMEND Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Luis Lorenzo Jr. and the DA personnel for the exemplary support they have given the swine industry. It is a model of what government can do to help solve agricultural problems.

We owe the DA support in three areas where the agricultural agenda recommendations of the Alyansa Agribuhayan, were implemented: (1) sector master planning, (2) import restrictions decisions and (3) adherence to phyto-sanitary requirements.

### Sector master planning

Prior to Secretary Lorenzo's assumption into office, the DA under a Republic Act mandate, drafting P3.5-million to formulate five-year (2002-2007) master plans for certain industry sectors. The very able Dr. Rolando Dy of the University of Iloilo led the Pacific Islands Inter-government primer sector efforts. Two private sector leaders were identified to lead to the plans implementation.

Secretary Lorenzo made a significant addition to this. A swine industry road map was formulated to serve 10% growth in the projected demand. A swine board, comprised of hog raisers, feed millers, corn growers, meat importers and transport operators, was created to help oversee this plan. Undersecretary Serlina Cruz-Gonzales was designated as the board's advisor.

One of the concrete outputs of this effort was the identification of various draughtboxes that would serve the 12 provincial clusters. Among the plants put up were: Bukidnon Feeds in Bacolod and Liza Meat Industry in General Santos. As a result of such efforts, the swine industry recorded a 6-percent increase from January to March 2004. It is hoped that this kind of socio master planning and support would be done soon in the remaining key agricultural sectors.

### Importation decisions

Last month, the Department of Trade and Industry acted the DA to import pork because war market price had increased from P125 to P145 per kilo. Immediately, Alfred Lim Jr., and Nemesio Oa, president and chair, respectively, of the National Federation of Hog Raisers Inc. and leading Alyansa Agribuhayan members, wrote the DA. They stated that there was no shortage in supply. Importation prices had already decreased from P90 to P85 per kilo. They argued that the problem was not with the supply or the production, but with the traders and retailers. If the P40 increase remains, the retail price should be P125. But without the price tag law implemented and without any suggested retail prices on a basis for anti-profiteering charges against unscrupulous retailers, pork prices increased to P145.

They wrote: "We are therefore appealing to your sense of fairness and justice to prevent the collapse of our local swine industry. There is no need to import pork because there is definitely no supply shortage. What is needed is overpricing of small pieces of pork."

The DA decided not to import pork. Poultry farmers, who claim the DA consultations with them were prematurely aborted, were not as fortunate. 24 authorized importers imported of 10 million kilos of chicken, 5 million of which would be on a standby basis. Since this importation still take at least 45 days to arrive, the poultry farmers say this still come at a time when there is weak demand and an oversupply.

Two days ago, Emporio San Diego, Iceland Broiler Farms Inc. Association president and the Alyansa Agribuhayan leader, said that the government announcement of this importation has resulted in chicken prices dropping to an average farmgate price of P55 per kilo. This is well below their production cost of P68.

"The announcement of importation is hurting us," San Diego said. Since the cases of poultry and pork prices are similar, San Diego wished that the DA would lay down further importation of poultry, the same way it did with pork. Importation is already allowed by the private sector without additional government intervention.

### Phyto-sanitary requirements

At an earlier hearing of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Secretary Lorenzo reprimed his agencies to the importance of meat products from countries infected with foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). Inspectors said that the Office International des Epizooties (OIE), an internationally recognized body, allows such imports provided certain phyto-sanitary measures are followed. "If OIE allows it, why should we stop?" they said.

On this issue, the Alyansa Agribuhayan received a Jan. 9, 2004 letter from David Wilson, DM, head of the International trade department.

Wilson wrote: "OIE standards are not necessary the member countries, and a country has the right, under WTO rules, to establish its own standards on the basis of the knowledge gained from a risk analysis. In other words, member countries are responsible for developing and implementing their own import standards for animal health."

Two such countries are the United States and New Zealand. David Miller, US agricultural counselor, wrote: "Even if an FMD-contaminated exporting country follows the steps outlined in the OIE procedures, the United States is free from FMD, and we'll not risk FMD contamination of its domestic livestock."

According to Derek Bellen, New Zealand's Animal Biosecurity director: "New Zealand does not allow the importation of risk products from countries with Foot-and-Mouth Disease."

Secretary Lorenzo supports such a position for the Philippines.

### Conclusion

The DA showed exemplary support for the swine industry in the areas of swine master planning, import decisions, and adherence to phyto-sanitary requirements. Entities with vested interests continue to exert pressure on the DA. It is hoped that the DA would continue to resist such pressure. It is also hoped that the exemplary support the DA has given the swine industry be extended to other key agricultural sectors for the benefit of our farmers and fisherfolk.

*The author is chair of Agrinomix, a private sector initiative, former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. Interested parties may e-mail the author at ordanezfp@yahoo.com or explor (02-8516657).*

## DISCLOSURES

RCBS PHP Inc. Liquidation Inc. bought 100,000 of its "B" shares at P1.00 each.

***

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. bought 144,000 of its own shares at P9.22 each.

***

BPI Technologies Inc. disclosed the resignation of the following directors: Alfredo Ayala, Michael Castellanos, John Joseph Feeney, and Rafael Fagen. Elected directors were Ruth Miller, Carlos Padua and Ramonito Raghunathan who was also elected chair of the board.

***

YUCHENG Technologies resigned as director of China Banking Corp.

***

MARIWASA Manufacturing Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 24, 9 a.m. at the Belmont Function Room of Peninsula Manila Hotel, Makati City. Only stockholders of record as of May 26 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting. *Compiled by Marivar D. Tabora*

PSE MANAGER

# Belle earmarks P1.5B for residential projects

PROPERTY developer Belle Corp. said it might spend at least P1.5 billion for the development of two major residential projects in Tagaytay Highlands in the next two years.

Belle vice-chair Willy Ocier said yesterday after the company's stockholders' meeting that he was optimistic about the prospects of these residential projects which would be launched within the next two years of financing debt problems.

Tagaytay Hills is a farm-to-sub-division spanning roughly 32 hectares of land in Amadeo, Batangas. It is Belle's first residential venture since the 40th Mile and Lakeview hospital in Calamba, Laguna.

A total of 129 lots out of 238 available lots have been sold last year with the development of the property expected to continue in 2004 with approximately 108 more lots for sale.

Tagaytay Hills features houses and lots with contemporary Mexican country design. The initial phase of Tagaytay Hills, also in Tagaytay Highlands, covers about 13 hectares.

Interchanges will be launched formally soon.

Belle still has about 15 hectares in the Highlands and 140 hectares in the Midlands available for future projects. Belle is also planning a resort development in Subic and Lakelands with over 3000 hectares of land along the shores of Taal Lake. *Elizabeth L. Bamilon*

# Gov't seeks $400M in WB, JBIC loans

[illegible] of the revenue agency's auditing system is necessary to better detect tax delinquency.

The problems confronting the public finance sector were reiterated by investors and credit rating agencies as among the biggest factors that drag the Philippine economy.

The government's huge budget deficit reached P139.9 billion last year. The government is hoping to limit it down to 249.8 billion this year.

The program to strengthen the public finance sector is expected to help the government ease its budget problem and achieve its goal of wiping out the deficit by 2009.

The government has likewise lined up new revenue measures that will help achieve its ambitious, yet goal.

The revenue measures, which the lone agency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) is yet to push for legislation in the next Congress, includes tax on text messaging, raising tax on transport, rationalization of fiscal incentives and rationalization of excise tax on "sin" products.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Summer is the best time to check out Ayala Westgrove Heights' available lots, as a number of strategically located types have been unveiled. There are payment schemes aplenty, making these choice lots even more affordable and highly recommended.

"Sunrise lots"
- Located along the main road, this type of elevated lots have the needs of many years in mind, affording them unobstructed views of sunrises from this vantage point.
- Sizes range from 417 to 487 square meters.

"Enclave lots"
- Situated in a tranquil enclave, only nine of them are for sale. Ideal for either growing families needing ample space for movement, or mature lovers needing a serene retreat from hectic routines.
- Sizes range from 415 to 542 square meters.

"Valley View lots"
- This set hosts the valley, otherwise known in these parts as "Nature's Preserve". Highly elevated and centrally cool with concentrated gusts of winds, perfect for those who want peace and quiet set in a naturally lush ambiance.
- Sizes range from 255 to 469 square meters.

"Estate Lots"
- These are near the future Westgrove Plaza retail area, and steps away from St. Scholastica's College. These are perfect for those who have children studying in the school, or those who want the convenience of being able to take quick trips to the shops.
- These large, flat lots range from 665 to 864 square meters.

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For further information on these exceptional lot types and Ayala Westgrove Heights, please contact us at 908-3000, log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph, or email ayalaland@ayalaland.com.ph.

Ayala Land, Inc. Makati City

# Lee Putnam Ventures buys majority stake in SPI

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

PRIVATE equity firm Thomas H. Lee Partners has acquired the majority stake in SPI Technologies Inc., one of the country's biggest providers of business outsourcing services.

This came as the conclusion of a public tender offer—which THLPV announced at SPI's annual meeting shareowners offered for sale, SPI said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

The Boston-based THLPV is a technology-focused private equity company affiliated with Thomas H. Lee Partners, a leading buyout firm, and Putnam Investments, a global money management company.

LIC Special Investments Pte., the private equity arm of the Government of Singapore Investment Corp., also bought a minority stake in SPI.

The deal, which values the company at $200 million, was described as one of the largest private equity deals in the business process outsourcing sector.

"This transaction is a vote of confidence not only in SPI's capability as a global industry player but also in the Philippines as a major destination of BPO services," Ernest Cu, SPI chief executive officer, said in a disclosure.

SPI was set up in 1996 and has turned into a multi-country outsourcing vendor with more than 4,000 employees and 10 offices across the United States, Asia and Europe.

THLPV bought the combined 71 percent stake held by Filipino islands-based equity company Crimson Group, insurance and financial services group AIG and the Philippine American Life and General Insurance Co., British equity firm Electra Partners Mauritius Ltd. and local holding firm A. Soriano Corp.

Under securities laws, a company is required to make a tender offer, or an offer to buy shares of minority shareholders, if it intends to acquire 15 percent or more, 30 percent over a period of 12 months or shares that would result in ownership of 50 percent of the company.

SPI earlier said the acquisition would not include its majority shareholdings in infocom company eVelocity International, the country's largest call center.

SPI previously spun off eVelocity via a property-dividend payable to stockholders.

eVelocity plans to apply for listing in the second quarter.

"The board has recommended acceptance of the offer because we believe it is an attractive one ... and because we are confident that with the support of a strong investor such as THLPV the company's prospects will continue to be bright," Alfredo Ayala, SPI chair said in a disclosure.

SPI provides services such as medical administration services, digital content conversion and document analysis.

TRADERS work on the floor at the International Petroleum Exchange in London during trading Wednesday. Record-high oil prices and a panicky market increased pressure on Opec ahead of its Beirut meeting, with the United Arab Emirates announcing it would hike production and oil kingpin Saudi Arabia is declaring it is "fully ready" to open the tap. —AP

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Shop Equipment / Lazer Levels & Laboratory / New Electrical & Building Supplies: Pneumatic rock drills & impact hammers. Hydraulic pipe benders & punch power units. Welding equipment, gear & accessories. Wheel balancers, changers, axle jacks & presses. Laser turret & surveying level sets. Plus over (100) items concrete QC laboratory. Enormous new & unused supply inventory including electric motors, starters, wires and more. Plumbing supplies of all types. Tons of nuts, bolts and fasteners. Bundles of Nylon & Manila rope. Large quantities of concrete finishing tools & materials. Plus large NEW rock drill inventory with drill steel, rods, extensions & adapters.

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# Rising demand in Europe ups abaca exports by 61.3%

By Christina A. Gaylican

EXPORTS of abaca, the country's first agricultural export, surged by 61.3 percent to 6,214 metric tons in the first four months of the year.

The growth was attributed to the significant increases in Europe's demand for Philippine abaca.

Philippine abaca fiber is used as a raw material for the manufacturing of cigarette filters, meat and tea casings, medical materials and other high-grade-raw-woven materials.

Data from the Fiber Industry Development Authority showed that the United Kingdom was the biggest market and exports to the country rose by 185 percent during the period to 4,340 metric tons.

The UK accounts for a little more than half of the total abaca exports to Europe.

Meanwhile, an accredited agency of the Department of Agriculture overturned the spike in demand to the transfer of a pulp milling firm from the United States to the UK.

Automakers from Germany are currently experimenting on Philippine abaca fiber to see if it could be used in its vehicles' interior and for composite panels.

Fida officials said in an interview that exporting these materials could be the big break that the abaca fiber industry was looking for in the last 10 years and would revitalize the industry.

In turn, demand for abaca fiber grew to 1,082 MT from 1,004 MT recorded last year.

Japan remains the biggest market at 1,787 MT, while Africa's demand for abaca remained flat at 45 MT in the first four months.

Other export markets are Indonesia, India, South Korea, China and Hong Kong.

The country's abaca production rose by 19.8 percent to 37,000 MT in the first nine months of last year from the 47,555 MT recorded in the same period the previous year.

Fida Administrator Cecilia Ilicita Soriano said the industry's production has not hit a high of 1 to 2 million MT a year, as it hasn't recover from the disease raids in the abaca banks, crop and the heavy rainfall.

Soriano said the abaca industry has not rid itself of these diseases as there are not enough funds from the government to buy insecticides and herbicides.

"The government needs to solve this problem with the private sector," she said. "Php 2.5 million funding requirement has not been released to us."

# DOF urges cut in LGU budget

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance wants to slash the budget allocated for local government units.

The DOF said the LGUs' "overdependence" on national funds was aggravating the government's already precarious financial condition.

The DOF added that the budget allocation for municipal and city governments seemed to have made them complacent, and hampered their capacity to generate their own funds.

"LGUs can do a lot more for the people, but they have not improved on their efforts to raise billion their revenue sources because they have been receiving windfalls (in the IRA [Internal revenue allotment])," said a ranking Finance official.

Under the Local Government Code, the national government automatically allots 40 percent of its annual budget for LGUs.

The share of each LGU is the 40 percent IRA is determined based on its population and land area.

The official said the government's economic team may push for revisions in the Local Government Code, and include those in the Medium-term Philippine Development Plan.

The economic team is composed of representatives of the DOF, the National Economic and Development Authority and the Department of Budget and Management.

LGUs should be exerting more effort to boost economic activity in their areas and be self-sustaining to help the national government ease the country's budget woes, said the finance official.

Reducing the IRA will help the national government reduce its expenditure and thus cut its budget deficit, which is expected to reach P139.8 billion this year.

Aside from reducing the IRA, the finance official said the basis for determining the budget allocation for each LGU should also be revised to include income.

"Those that are earning more, Makati for instance, should be given a lesser budget allocation. There are really a lot of provisions [of the code] that have to be reviewed," said the finance official.

# Jamby's juice

...till. Oh! She has not even assumed office, but already Ms. Ana Consuelo "Jamby" Madrigal has people not only talking on her armies and eyelash tint, waves, claiming authorship of his unpredictable electoral success.

Despite her explicit order not to talk to the press about the success of her campaign, the campaign manager of Madrigal went ahead and met with the brainers, resulting in the Page 1 story on Wednesday.

The senator-elect did not want to be interviewed but the campaign manager decided on his own to face the senior without her consent," a Madrigal spokesperson said, adding that Jamby was "hysterically upset."

The senator-elect was "stunned" that her main Cha-Cha and her leaning of her helicopter and her deep pockets were lead to be disclosed.

"It make matters worse, the campaign manager appeared to have grabbed too much credit for her remarkable showing in the Senate race," the Madrigal spokesperson said.

We also understand that the new senator has ordered a post-mortem of her campaign expenditure and the suppliers-exhibitors who seem to have entered the campaign gravy.

## The other Duero

If you are motoring to Tagaytay this long and taking the Aguinaldo Highway or Governor's Drive this weekend, be sure to pass Dasmariñas exercise before 12 a.m. to escape Makati-sized traffic pileup.

...ulevard, the road to Tagaytay village" corridor now has two malls... Robinsons and SM...at the crucial intersections. At the inauguration of the SM Dasmariñas branch on May 21, the franchised-up Kapuso...radio, although a Friday, reached as far as the Manila Memorial Park, over a kilometer away.

According to SM banner Ysmeta Ong, the Bicolnia and the local political heirs already have plans to finance the construction of an overpass to that vital intersection. Still, other than bottleneck, driving on to the expanded, four-lane highway to Tagaytay is a breeze anticipated by the two-lane backroads of Silang known by private motorists.

And in a reminder to the guerrilla...cution of the neighborhood, there is even a spa and a carpet shop in the new SM mall. Even the bachelorhood has the looks and facilities of Season's of Greenhills.

Parking is adequate, and, best of all, free.

## From milk to wine

ALAMIA MIL president Wilfred Steven Uytengsu Jr. told reporters during the company's stockholders' meeting Tuesday that he was expanding Alaska's dairy offerings into "shelf-stable" products such as confectionery, biscuits and cereals.

What Uytengsu did not say is that he himself has already branched out and is marketing a shelf-stable liquid, specifically wine.

Uytengsu and fellow oenophiles have decided to spur their hobby and set up the Provisable Wine Exchange to import and distribute little-known but excellent wines from a given region or region or a time.

Their latest offering, all California wines at the mid-$1200 level, are considerably priced, given that the cargo had to be consolidated and shipped in a refrigerated van from Sidney round the world.

For example, their 2001 Bernardi Merlot, a favorite during a recent wine tasting in Uytengsu's elegant Forbes home, is priced at P1,920 a bottle, as against the $46 ($56) a bottle + bid + shipping and handling quoted by US-based Internet wine sellers.

Their 1998 L Vintage Brut from the J. Winery of Sonoma goes for P1,900 a bottle, versus the $27 ($30) quoted by US retailers distributors.

## Heard through the grapevine

JOSE PUBLIC, business chief of Sen. Miguel Coz, who went on leave to oversee a possible media campaign for Fernando Poe Jr., may no longer be able to come back and work for SMC and its subsidiaries.

The PR chief happens to be a friend-ing loyalist as well.

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# BSP keeps ...

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...and modest investment growth, suggest that the policy stance should continue to support the real sector and provide adequate stimulus to credit activity," he said.

He noted that the weak trend in investments constituted a downside risk to the sustainability of output growth in the medium term and thereby called for a trend to exercise caution in considering possible adjustments in policy rates in the future.

"Possible wage adjustments, which could affect the demand for money, has been factored into the inflation models to the extent of 9 percent starting July 2004 and 4 percent in July 2005," he said.

Doris C. Dumlao

ELECTRONICS MARKET RECOVERY

# Subic Freeport exports up 79% in April

By Rancel W. Domingo

THE SUSTAINED recovery of the computer and electronics market boosted total exports from Subic Freeport by 79 percent to $501 million in April, from $281 million in the same month last year, the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority yesterday said.

SBMA Chair Felicito C. Payumo said in a statement that the energy passed in April boosted (SBMA) total exports in the first four months to $2005 million, up by 20.4 percent from $1281 million in the same period last year.

"The huge increase in exports from that is the recovery of the world market demand for computers and other electronic products from a recent slump," Payumo said.

The official said the other sectors that contributed to the economic zone's earnings were those that make high value-added products such as processed woods, high end garments, jewelry and aircraft production.

Quoting a report from the One-Stop Export Documentation Center-Subic (OSEDC), Payumo said Winstron Infocomm was the top exporter as it posted receipts worth $$225 million from January to April—an increase of 53 percent from $147 million in the comparative period last year.

Shipment from the Taiwanese firm made up three quarters of the total export earnings realized by the Subic Freeport during the first four months.

A subsidiary of Acer Computer, Winstron makes laptop computers, motherboards and peripherals, fax machines, integrated circuits, microelectronic and softwares for the brands Acer, IBM and Hitachi.

Electric machinery and appliances maker Sanyo Dedi was the second largest exporter with total export receipts of $76 million.

Optotec Corp., maker of automated teller machine parts, was third with $72 million worth of exports.

Japanese wood processing firm Aiken Sangyo (Philippines) ranked fourth, posting $8 million in export receipts, while Taiwan Hitachi was fifth with $5 million.

OSEDC manager Fred Tellus said the agency was "positive that the export performance of Subic Freeport would continue to pick up in the coming months with the high output of Winstron and other manufacturing companies located there.

# Puerto Princesa sees doubling of tourist arrivals next year

By Abigail L. Ho

PUERTO Princesa City, tourist capital of Palawan, sees tourist inflow doubling to 200,000 next year.

An each tourist would likely spend at least P2,000 during his stay in the city, Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn said in an interview yesterday that the entry of 200,000 tourists would generate around P400 million in tourism revenue for the city.

"Our focus is still on tourism. We've been averaging around 100,000 tourists a year, which translates to P200 million in revenue. Palawan has really recovered from the slump," he said.

He added that tourism associations in Palawan had become more active in promoting the city as a tourist spot, with visitor inflow showing signs of growth.

Two months ago, new airline South Phoenix Airways Corp., in cooperation with Luyang Luyang Aerospace of Malaysia, inaugurated its Puerto Princesa-Kota Kinabalu flights.

Hagedorn said that should tourism boom, the city's tourism potential.

While bustling in the influx of visitors from all over the world, he said local tourists still comprised the bulk of Puerto Princesa's annual tourist arrivals.

To lure even more local tourists into visiting the city, he said the city government would promote its P152-million sanitary landfill project as a possible "lakbay-aral" site for students and researchers who want to study how it would operate when finished.

"The sanitary landfill is already 95-percent complete. Upon completion, it will not only address our solid waste problem, but also serve as a potential 'lakbay-aral' site," he said.

LIFESTYLE
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# Brooches and belts and pins, oh my!

CORPORATE strategy is a breeze if you know where to pin a pretty brooch or two. Pinstriped polo shirt from Tyler

BAG-nove cue by pinning brooches like butterflies from Crysalis's gift shop at the Power Plant Mall, on a (left) denim bag with wooden handles from Bench Bar I, purple brocade bag from Lily; black satin evening bag from DM department store

ACCESSORIES can provide an effortless, enjoyable and affordable way of expressing one's style and creating a more versatile wardrobe.

A chunky neckpiece, a colorful printed scarf or a funky pair of shoes can easily dress an outfit up or down. In fact, they can make ordinary basics like jeans and a white tee look different each time they are worn.

Brooches are no different in their ability to jazz up your everyday outfits and evening wear. Depending on the kind of brooch, you can create different looks to suit your various moods and occasions.

A cutesy pin, for instance, can evoke the romanticism of the Victorian era, while a modern or art deco design in diamond and platinum can help accentuate a sleek and sophisticated ensemble.

In ancient times, brooches were mostly used as fasteners to hold clothing together. The Greeks used them to hold their attire to give it shape, while the Irish used them to clasp their cloaks. To put it more plainly, brooches were used much like the modern safety pin.

But possibly because of people's inherent craving for all things beautiful, the ordinary pin or brooch was eventually transformed

BROOCHES >>

## APPLES' PICKINGS

*Apples Aberon-Sandhawalt*

EVENING VEILS can look more spectacular with the use of different brooches—from vintage styles and romantic floral motifs to sleek, modern designs.

# Bodies to die for

Text by Nikka Plum M. Sablan
Correspondent
Photos by Randy Ravelthoo

TOO HOT: Topless hopefuls try to stand cool in their trunks

So you want to be a model. Unfortunately for you, Bodyshots 2004—Reborn has already finalized its list of 30 official candidates to compete in the country's pioneering model competition, and you're not in.

From over a thousand applicants, those who made the grade with their Zoolander charm and gaze-inducing noodles are Art Arc, Mike Bellot, Al Dee, Dennis Hood, Blaire Edaria, Drew Gonzales, Warren de Guzman, Jess Magbuo, Ryan Marquez, Precious Quines, Rey Ramos, Jasper Rentoy, Neil Tabaquero, Ian Valdezco and Erwann Virgilio (No Male Division).

Meanwhile, vie to compete in the finals for the female division are Grace Alfonso, Alexis Almeiseo, Lady Joanne Bunggo, Ana Mae Gamosa, Margo Gutierrez, Mariveen Gutierrez, Bridgette Imperial, CJ Latonio, Elaine Matamoros, Marielle Morcoso, Tina Regalado, Kaye Tayco, Margo Tuason, Jai Williams and Jenny Yu.

Presented in the press recently at the Indian resto Prince of Jaipur, the wannabes posted their lips, squinted their eyes and strutted their stuff, giving everyone a sneak peek of what's in store at the Bodyshots 2004—Reborn gala night on June 8, 8 p.m. at the Le Pavillion at Shaw Boulevard.

Hosted by Wilma Doesnt, the press presentation showcased the contestants in various states of their unclothedness, starting off with a series of hip and eye-catching clothes from Levi's, a co-presenter with the Cellular.

The contestants then switched to sporty mode by carrying the logo of Gold's Gym, another co-presenter, resulting in an athletic act that was sexy, hip and athletic all at the same time.

And then came the heart-stopping swimsuit segment highlighting the contestants' impressive, well-sculpted, camera flash-inducing body. Clad in neon spandex designed by Roland Lirio of TEAF and manufactured by Ace Craft, plus accessorized with bangles for the girls and ribbons that enamored the ghosts of the Ultimate Warrior for the boys, all 30 hopefuls made cuts that everybody wondering wouldn't want to miss the gala night.

Gala night wouldn't see only two dreamers emerge victorious, but effect the whole shindig, doors and possibly windows will open for all the contestants.

Bodyshots, after all, has been responsible for minting new movie stars, beauty queens and supermodels, with its aim to produce faces that will shape the fashion trends of designers here and abroad.

Join with two respected names in the fashion industry collaborating on the event—designer Mike Carmona and the Fashion Designers Association of the Philippines—nothing less than a grand show is expected on the finale night.

For ticket inquiries, call 7218901, 7277186 or 7258252 and look for Ray.

WILL THE REAL MODEL PLEASE STAND UP? Many are in line, but only a handful will emerge triumphant.

The Bodyshots 2004—Reborn gala night promises a glam, grand show

PUT YOUR BEST SELF FORWARD. Only the best is worthy of the Bodyshots title.

# Brooches and belts and pins, oh my!

CREATE different looks with the use of belts. Go preppie with a groupy-ish style and skintight colored sports shirt or get kinky with a double-looped big belt. You can also choose to stay classic by donning a thin belt over a basic knit top or cardigan.

Photography Kit

Into an art piece. Artisans began paying more attention to detail. One standing show mixture: visually arresting designs.

Today brooches are used to create fashion statements and to add panache to any outfit. Actually, this season and most are all about embellishment, and one surefire way of achieving this look is by wearing a brooch or even combining several pieces.

For example, take your ordinary rhinestone cardigan and adorn it with two or three classic corsage pins in a flattering location. Or wear a brooch on your hair-than-ordinary bun and make it look more ornamental. You can even create asymmetric looks gathering one side of your shirt and clasping it with a pretty brooch.

You don't have to stop there. You can also pin your brooches on your everyday or evening bags. And if it suits you, go ahead and wear them on your hair to accentuate a casual do or to make a formal hairstyle look more special.

### Blazing buckles

Another way of styling and updating your look is by using different kinds of belts.

A belt with an interesting buckle or a strap with an interesting design can make any plain outfit stand out. And even classic, simple belt styles can add a most welcome finishing touch to any attire.

Belts have also been in existence since the olden days, used mostly to keep clothing in place but eventually becoming decorative and savvy pieces as well.

Unlock a preppy look by donning colorful grosgrain belts with collared cotton paper tops akin to Ralph Lauren or Lacoste tees worn with tight cable knit tops.

Or perform an opposites vibe by using a leather belt with a simple streamlined buckle similar to Burberry classic belts. You can also get more sensitive by wearing your belts over loose tops or hipster dresses, shirt dresses and the like.

There are no definite rules when choosing and donning your brooches and belts. The possibilities are endless. All you need is the willingness to experiment and a little daring do.

But as in any aspect of fashion, it is always about finding a look that suits you and that you are comfortable and confident with.

Email the author at nparbo@yahoo.com

TOUR brooches need not be of a particular type. Get creative and funky by donning a stylized version made of leather, sequins, beads, ostrich feathers, tulle, voile and linen. Lolita Fenech Vivas Belleza at the Power Plant Mall

UPDATE your look by adorning your cardigans with several pins that complement each other. Earrings worn as brooches from Anita Chan at the Power Plant Mall

EVOKE the romanticism of the Victorian era by wearing a cameo brooch on any of your modern jersey tops.

# Singapore does the big 'S'

From page B1

tents of the Filipinos), Singapore, when on sale, offers really quality goods on a bargain that you can't ordinarily have here or elsewhere.

Prices now until July 20, the dates to all-year all malls are marking down their goods from 10-70 percent, covering high- to low-end brands.

Singapore is the land of Zara, a fashion chain (celebrated brand. While I didn't peek into to building on Orchard, I heard it holds a sale at the time of year.

We did the malls, from Wisma to Parkson, the whole lot. I didn't succumb to shop (don't you find "Confessions of a Shopaholic" predictable, if not its basic premise?) but did a casual survey of the terrain nonetheless.

My reunion with her female had insists still intact will know what I mean...seeing all those goodies and feeling that tug of war between your mind/purse string (brains right side) and your passion/obsessions (the you of what passes for your brain).

The shopping landscape for you. At Robinson, Zara, Jacksin and some at 20 percent off. At G2000, camisoles or lingerie tops (which women everywhere are wearing on evening dates) for less than $$10. At Timberland, fine leather shoes at 50-70 percent off, shirts and jackets at 30 percent off or up.

At NDG, a cool wrap dress at 70 percent off, among other finds. Topshop has sets of the widest range of goods on sale. At G.Hear Scad Fourth joins branch at Wisma, from 15-30 percent off; its jeans have the cut (it's cut at the knees) and finish your teen kids will love.

## Wide selections

It was at British India where I lingered, because not only were its deals good, its selections were also so wide. At 70 percent off were corporate khaki, black pants, tan-colored chinos with daisy-fresh pretty as weekend sweet wear, hip-hug jeans, fine-threaded kebaya in cool pastel tones.

At 50 percent off and below were extra or vintage chic separates, including an exquisite crochet cardigan and a black leather skirt. Those are good buys because they're chic, wearable—and handcrafted—yet sold at great discount. Then to dancing upon clothes as investment.

For more bargains outside the malls, there's Mustapha Centre, open 24 hours, selling small boxes electronics and appliances units to cloches, saris, silks and other Thai fabrics, to clothes (ladies', men's and babies').

Among my finds were cotton kebaya. Thinki to bohemian chic of years past, batiks and Mexican set making a serious comeback—good old reliables when you've had it with using fit.

We also visited Heeren on Orchard, with neither the intention nor the capacity to shop there, but to see the design of the store that's the biggest for this luxury brand in Southeast Asia. Opened last March, it occupies 534 sq m over three levels, with the third level designed as an open, multifunctional space for exhibitions. It also has Hermes leather items for redesign.

Heeren, of course, is home to the famous Birkin bag (they operated on industry of imitations, including the Jelly Belly), other leather fashion accessories, shoes, scarves, jewelry to home line is handcrafted fine leather—Kinda like drinks in the swirling dust and evolving stash.

The stores at Changi Airport are also part of the Great Singapore Sale organised by the Singapore Retailers Association and supported by the Singapore Tourism Board. It coincides with the peak travel season of key regional markets, inducing Australia, China and India. It aims to sell as many as 46,000 travel (shop and eat) packages, up 70 percent from 2002.

The event is also timed with the Singapore Arts Festival (running until June 20) and Singapore Food Festival (July 1-31). MasterCard, the Sale's official card, is issuing Shoppers MasterCard with prepaid $$50 load, plus exciting holiday to join weekly draws and a grand draw.

The Sale story is a masterstroke in marketing. Singapore follows an annual calendar of events and festivals that should be the backbone of any tourism program, so attractions planning stream can book from.

The way Singapore is run—short engagement by objectives—is every CEO's dream. It's about time we kept our politicians under lock and key.

E-mail the author at wongsan@sbg.net.sg

DISCOUNTS Road has "Sale" written all over it.

HANDBAG In printed jelly (£62) with interwoven jute fibers

## Hot and cool

PA Vittorio bags come in the hottest designs and the coolest materials. One of the country's foremost leather brands now has its eyes fixed on the fabric of the future: plastic. Prints and patterns adorn polished plastics while the brand's Whirls Collection features square angles and cut-out leather handles. The technicolor totes come in nostalgic designs.

The bags is at Marketa 1, Ayala Centre; Greenbelt 1, Ayala Centre; Alabang Town Centre; SM Megamall Building A; SM City Annex, North Edsa; SM City Cebu; Galleria Mall Davao.

ORANGE Tropicana jelly bags

ANOTHER handbag in printed jelly (£62) with interwoven jute fibers